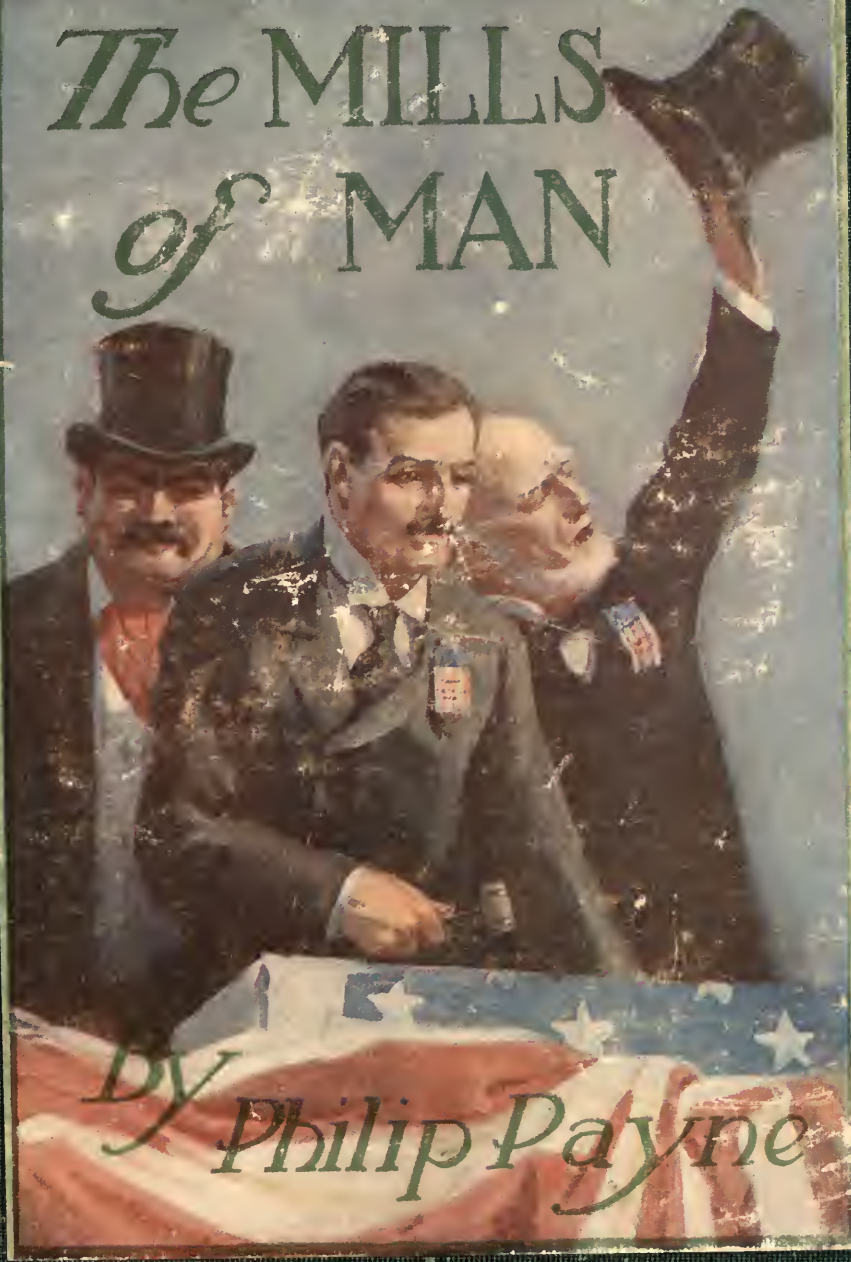
The MILLS of MAN



By Philip Payne

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THE MILLS OF MAN

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A NOVEL

By

Philip Payne

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Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting,
With exactness grinds he all.

F. Von Logau (1614-1655).

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The Mills of Man

I

MRS. CORLIS

THE "limited" from New York for Chicago rushed across the Indiana prairies, under its flashing wheels a crash of steel, from its stunted stack a plume of smoke and steam. The last car, attached by special order, was the private car of J. J. Jarrett.

The summer sky was cloudless and the light that fell from it a glare. The heat, likewise, was intense. And through this heat and light the swift train ran on rails that glittered, while the rolling blackness, belched from the locomotive, enveloped the cars behind like the hair of a driving comet.

The shades of the private car were closely drawn, to shut from the travelers within any hint of the day without. Inside, indeed, except for the even motion of the balanced car, existed slight indication of the flying clamor. What air entered had been cooled by electric fans and filtered free of soot: in fact, whatever American invention could accomplish to make pleasurable a transcontinental journey, had been fulfilled in the construction and

appointments of Mr. Jarrett's private car, " Victoria."

The " Victoria " carried but one passenger this journey, Mrs. Walter H. D. Corlis, the owner's niece. And she passed the hours as in a state of trance. She gave no orders, she desired no service, she refused to eat and had dismissed her maids from attendance. She wanted but to be let alone, to be left to lie in the half obscurity, companioned only by her thoughts and by the monotonous, revolving beat of the wheels beneath upon the metal way.

She lay outstretched upon a bed in the middle compartment of the car, prone upon her back, with hands clasped beneath her head—her figure in rigidity not unlike those effigies of mediæval ladies atop of tombs.

But her released mind ran upon the rails of thought more swiftly than the moving train could glide. Yesterday, in New York, she had been whirled about in a set of activities; to-morrow, in Chicago, another set would seize her. The interlude of passage was as a punctuation point between two sentences of her crowded life. She used it for review.

It was a grave review, since in New York she had learned what conduces to serious thought—the specialists had given her not more than a half-year to live. She had gone up from Washington

to receive their verdict. Being a courageous spirit, and, also, a woman not overweeningly in love with life, she had taken the sentence coolly. The knowledge did not daunt her; it merely changed the current of her thoughts, unhinged her in a measure from the world and, in the old phrase, rendered her meet for repentance.

She had exacted from the physicians delay in informing her family and, from the latter, when informed, she meant to exact disregard of her condition. She did not relish parade of woe, nor did she wish to put any ostensible affection to the trial: were she allowed her way, she would die without preliminaries and minus flourishes.

Moreover, important events were at hand. Her father was seeking reëlection to the United States Senate from Illinois, and her husband was fastening his control upon his party in Chicago and looking out for mastery of the state at large. The political convention, which would decide these matters, met within ten days, and the campaign to follow would absorb the summer and most of the fall. In the approaching contest she had her part to play, a part she had conceived in her harassed father's interest, and she had vowed the hazard of sickness and sympathy and anxiety on her own account should not disturb the engrossment of the players in the great game.

So Mrs. Corlis had determined. Yet, before she

put the doom from out the foreground of her thoughts, she would employ the journey to sum up conclusions upon some things.

A few were proved. Among them that her convictions, as directed by experience, had circled to their source again; for she recognized—a little humorously—that what survived in her at last was her Puritanism, what her husband was accustomed contemptuously to denominate her "limit."

She found, now that its conclusion was inevitable, that she could put an estimate upon her life: so much she knew it meant, so much she realized was missing. She understood, for instance, why she had married Mr. Corlis; it was exactly that knowledge which repelled her now, and yet subdued her, when he was by, to his desires. She understood why, while youth may seem charming in its ideal aspirations, it must, of necessity, be ignorant and cannot be unselfish. Through ignorance youth mistakes its heroes, and by reason of self-absorption it must fail of moral beauty.

For after all, she was convinced, the secret of life was moral and its success a thing of character. She did not frame this dogma intolerantly, since she had need of charity herself, and furthermore, she was to her finger-tips a woman of the world. Yet, discarding though she did the too literal standards of a provincial or conventional morality, she felt in her soul that all men and women must

be judged by this moral quality at last. Otherwise was not the world a materiality and human life an outrage and a hideous farce?

In her youth before her marriage she had revolted, mentally, against the restraints of Puritanism and its want of beauty. She had yearned for enlargements; she had demanded color, passion, outward dignities, expressed nobilities. She had asserted the goodness of life and the possibilities of the human spirit. Art was for delight, society for pleasure, just as wine was for the delectation of the palate and luxury for the delicate perfection of the body.

Now, at forty years of age, she saw that the great truths, formulated by the thinkers of the Puritans, were truths still, though archaically stated. And she, who had enjoyed much, who had achieved more—she would have given all, her wealth, her satisfied ambition, the flattery she received, for the plain assurance that she was a good woman in the old-fashioned sense, and that her husband loved her, and that her children thought of her as mother.

The afternoon declined and presently she grew aware that Chicago must be near. She girded up her will, dismissing from her mind what might have been and what she would be pleased to have, to face what was and what could not be changed. She was again the Mrs. Corlis the world knew.

II

MR. CORLIS.

THE train entered the vast cave of sheet-iron, which was the station.

Mrs. Corlis appeared upon the platform of her car and obsequious porters helped her down the steps, while the conductor, with a hand to the visor of his cap, stood bowing.

She afforded a picture as she advanced up the long causeway between the tracks, followed by a retinue of maids and servants and a stout brace of porters. She was so obviously the modern divinity, the choicest development of the American culture of wealth; she could be assured and gracious, since she required no touch of hauteur to enforce her dignity. Whoever saw her felt who she was and yielded precedence willingly.

She wore a gray traveling gown and a gray hat, whose shades corresponded with the silver-gray of her hair. She was tall and rather strongly built in the shoulders and hips, the waist a bit too long, her hands perhaps too large. But distinction qualified her—not alone the factitious distinction which attends social eminence as diamonds do money, but the essential distinction of spirit and of mind.

Mrs. Corlis had achieved two different successes, and there was that in her bearing which was indicative of each. In her youth, in Washington, she had won reputation for her wit and cleverness, her sense for politics and her perception of talent. Since her marriage (she was now forty and had been married fifteen years) she had become recognized as preëminently a manager: she had managed society in Washington and at Newport, she had made a place for herself in New York, and had, by degrees, come to be one of those half-dozen women in America who lead society and control fashion.

"I wonder where Walter can be," she was thinking, as she approached the ticket-puncher's barrier which marked the termination of the causeway. Just then she spied him hastening towards the gate, and a smile curved her frank lips and gladdened her dark eyes.

Ah, after all, what a man he looked, was her thought. How well he moved; how symmetrical his figure; and, as he came near, how handsome his features! She felt his fascination; she greeted it with an undiminished joy: it had always been thus; it would be to the end. In his presence she did not ask why he dominated her life; she accepted the fact almost thankfully. Her rebellions, her criticisms of him, all resulted in this—he had but to appear.

Mr. Corlis welcomed his wife, whom he had not seen for months, as he might have welcomed a confidential friend. His manner made evident that he trusted her infinitely, was fond of her, within limits. She on the other hand did not measure her greeting; she smiled up into his face, her eyes affectionate, her features glowing. But he ignored her fervor.

"Victoria, I am glad you are here; I am in urgent need of advice." These were his first words.

"Oh, Walter," she begged with a charming expression of disappointment, "for no other reason, pray?"

"Oh, don't be a two months' bride," he chided laughingly. "I have altogether too much need of your brain to wish to cloud it with sentiment."

She winced under the phrase, and, to hide her pain, turned to the servants.

"The carriage, William, and Jones, see that the luggage is sent up at once."

"What a town," she remarked to her husband, as the carriage advanced through the streets, "clamor and smoke and no pavements, and yet, do you know, after the smug East I fancy its heathen license for a change. The Democracy is fierce and free in Chicago."

Characteristically, Mr. Corlis replied with a subject of his own:

"I suppose you are too tired to allow me to bring a man home to dinner."

She wanted him to herself, but she did not show disappointment.

"That depends somewhat upon whom the intruder may be," she replied, smiling.

"Oh, he will amuse you; he's Mike McBride, Boss McBride," explained Mr. Corlis. "He will be flattered; McBride's Irish enough to long to be a gentleman. A little attention from you will excite his profuse gratitude."

"That is not so bad," she said after a moment's consideration. "A Boss will be novel; he can hardly prove boresome. Besides, it suits me, I fancy; I may interest your buccaneer in a little plot on my own account."

Mr. Corlis smiled subtly, but he refrained from questions.

"Very well then," he acquiesced, "you will not find McBride impervious to social influence, exercised by such a mistress of it as yourself. And if it's arranged, will you excuse me from further attendance and set me down here? This is the Washington and LaSalle corner. You know," he responded to the objection in her eyes, "how busy I am—up to my ears—with the State Convention but ten days off, and the whole of Cook County to get and to keep in line."

Until now she had not seen her husband since

February, when he had spent a week, less a day, in Washington. That winter and spring she had passed with her father, although in her own house, at the capital; but Mr. Corlis had been so deeply engaged in business that he could not leave Chicago. In fact, now that he had entered Illinois politics, it was part of his policy conspicuously to identify himself with Chicago life. He desired to dissipate the latent suspicion, that, if not a legal, he might be an actual alien to the state and to the West. Necessity for conformity he felt to be the greater, inasmuch as his wife preferred the East and was supposed to be inclined to eschew the society of the Western "Porkopolis," or, at least, to refuse to be identified with it.

The carriage proceeded with Mrs. Corlis alone. Yet for her it remained filled with his presence; and then, as the impression of his personality faded, she sought to retain it in vividness by rehearsing its each dear detail: the deep tones of his voice; the gray tinting of his face; the proud arch of the head between the closely-fitting ears; the dark hair, grown thin, and thereby increasing his distinction; the square, clear chin beneath the close-cropped mustache; the turquoise colored eyes, with their cold light, shaded by dark brows and lashes; the full neck like a column; the broad chest, where so often her head had lain; the shoulders, strong enough to block a rush, graceful

enough to fit a Hermes—that conjunction, in fine, which she had never seen so well expressed in any other man; that superb union which fascinated her, of force and elegance, of brutality and refinement, of the luxurious susceptibility belonging to an Aaron Burr and the cold intellectuality characteristic of Jay Gould.

The very lines of his figure and the modeling of his features, did they not set forth the reconciliation of opposing qualities in the man? He was black and white, passionate yet cool, ardent but tenacious, genial yet selfish, vain but hardly to be beguiled by flattery. His profile, a little distance off, showed aquiline, chiseled in the regularity of a Roman Cæsar. Nearer, it revealed curves, so slight as to seem elusive, so faint as to exclude softness, yet sufficient to denote love of sensual things.

The carriage crossed the river to the North Side and gained the wide avenue of the Lake Shore Drive. It stopped before the great house J. J. Jarrett had built for his niece; but Mrs. Corlis, looking out, hated its magnificence.

Upstairs in her dressing room, before she rang for her maid, she turned herself critically in front of the long glass. Ruthlessly she put the question: Could she condemn a man for his failure to remain in love with that woman the glass revealed? With candor cruel to herself she

pressed the consideration home. At all costs she would be just, just to the man. Was she not proud of possessing the robust mind and magnanimous temper which enabled her to sympathize with masculinity and to condone its weaknesses?

She scanned from crown to sole the image in the glass. She catalogued every positive point—the white hair that lent a powdered eighteenth-century grace; the lustrous eyes with their depths of passion and their humorous scintillations; the patent intelligence. But, with contemptuous justice, she also found in that worldly, kindly, intellectual woman no least trace of the fascinating doll or the seductive mistress. She could hardly require a man to be overpowered by the impulse to pet such a woman or to dote upon her as the object of his passions. She knew she was the closest friend her husband had; she could not wonder he did not come to her for dalliance.

Yet—she looked again, and the next compartment of her mind dared to form the query, whether some man, more spiritual, should she say, or more profound, might not discover in her, as she stood there, some tragic import, some pathetic splendor, transcending lust of eye and touch?

At that reflection she drew herself up scornfully, tall and wasted as she was. A great and almost objective pity moved her for the woman in the glass, a pity touched with pride. For the woman

had so much brain and heart and power and wealth, and yet she was denied that common thing which silly women shared with queens of charm, which any hussy on the street might have to sell or give away—the seduction of the flesh.

Then the pious inclination in her blood reproved her gently for her pity of herself and for her pride's assertion. She had reaped what she had sown.

III

THE BOSS

LADIES of a dainty breeding and of the delicate refinement of mind which is, fortunately or unfortunately, being considered an attribute of a past generation, have been known to impute some vulgarity to Mrs. Corlis, or to comment, at least, on her lack of "tone." True, Mrs. Corlis was both modern and of the world; if she possessed fastidiousness, she seldom allowed it to exclude any phase of the world, however superficially distasteful. That toleration, or sympathy, which she had, might offend some as lacking in discrimination; to others it appeared to constitute a meritorious catholicity of mind and temper.

"The Black Boss" of Chicago did, to be sure, resemble an opulent bartender or some retired police captain; but his hostess immediately decided that she liked the man. She had ever possessed a weakness for human bulldogs.

Mr. McBride carried an aldermanic paunch and a swollen neck, creased by circles running all the way around; yet he was nimble on his feet and equally ready with his flattery. However, it was not his glibness with compliments that recom-

mended him to the favor of his hostess, but the Celtic blue of his clear eyes and the vague pathos which informs so many Irish faces and which may indicate an artless ideality or merely an alcoholic thirst.

Otherwise " Mike " McBride was a big, black, burly brute, with a heavy jowl, coarse hair, a thick mustache, and the short, curved beak of a fighting brigadier. The man was a policeman's club. Yet a vast diplomacy was expressed, somehow, in the broad slope of the Irish shoulders, and those unlettered lips of his had, beyond doubt, kissed the blarney stone.

Mrs. Corlis evoked his latent gallantry and under her management he displayed the astonishing adaptability of his race. She enforced awe, but his excessive reverence did not crush him to the carpet; it rather served to inspire him to rise to the high pitch of the occasion. In other words, the rough Boss demonstrated that he was not devoid of a rudimentary social instinct.

The situation amused Mr. Corlis hugely, as his wife perceived. He and McBride, she saw, got on famously; they " hit it off " well together, and for a time she was at a loss to discover what community of spirit could exist between this unpolished diamond of the Chicago river wards and the most sophisticated gentleman she had ever known. The solution burst upon her like a divination before

the dinner was half through, and involuntarily she laughed to herself.

"What a pair," she reflected, "what a partnership, to persuade a common council, to corrupt an electorate, to plunder a public, to seduce a legislature, to bestride a community! Small wonder is it that the two have built up a marvel of a machine! What chance has an abject, defenseless community against such an able brace of pirates?"

That her vision was so unhesitating, was characteristic of Mrs. Corlis; for she was not one of those good fools of women who spend stolen money unctuously, believing it to be just gain. That clear perception should produce no severe shock to her morality was likewise characteristic, although it is to be said that such callousness of conscience (if it is to be so broadly styled), was due as much to the accident of her environment and the toleration of her mind as to any essential deficiency of nature.

Presently, borrowing the spirit of her husband and Boss McBride, she caught the contagion of the game. She had already set the Boss at ease by her cordiality and consideration, and the power to do so she enjoyed in all the kindliness of her heart. She entered into the humor of the situation, too, sharing it with her husband and delighting in it like a man.

McBride proved a "good fellow." If he sus-

pected that he was furnishing entertainment in a form too subtle for himself to grasp, he did not resent the possibility in the least, but was amiable enough to be pleased that he could fulfill an actual function in such exalted company. "Indeed," his hostess genially concluded, "the creature's irresistible and knows it very well."

Gradually the conversation took a serious tone, enabling Mrs. Corlis to remark,

"I have wondered very often how you manage, Mr. McBride. I understand an orator's influence or a debater's in a legislative hall; I can even imagine how a man of great executive capacity must proceed. But, I confess, the methods by which you organization leaders direct the masses of a great city are beyond my comprehension. How is it done, pray? You must master all sorts and styles of men and magnetize the mob as well, I take it. What more? Where's the secret? I think it marvelous. As a mere feat of leadership it excels, to my mind, most others in America.—Now, Mr. McBride"—the flattering innuendo was bewitching—"you must take pity on my curiosity and tell me just how you do it and what is the mysterious secret of your power."

The gross Boss shivered with pure ecstasy, like a debutante accepting her first florid compliment from a man of thirty-five. In sheer embarrassment he winked at Mr. Corlis, while a pleased

smile spread thickly from under his stubbed mustache up to his Irish eyes.

"Indeed, I'm at a loss to let you know, Mrs. Corlis. I just let the boys understand what orders have got to be obeyed, and they go out and get 'em done. That's all."

"But if they didn't, it would not be all," amended Mr. Corlis, with a smile.

"Well, I should say not," responded the Boss in an enlarged tone. "What's the organization fit for, I'm askin', if it don't get orders carried out? Without orders from me and obeyin' 'em by the boys, the organization 'd be on the bum in no time at all. And the boys, if orders ain't obeyed on the scratch, know there's goin' to be the worst kind of rough house." Under her admiring eye he summed up the theory of his generalship, "I don't stop to lead 'em; I drive 'em, Mrs. Corlis, and that's about how it's done, I guess."

"But what gives you the power?" she persisted, aware that she was playing on the master chord of his self-love. "Why are you boss instead of some other man? Why do they fear and love you so much that they remain loyal to you? Why, in other words, are you *you?*"

McBride dilated under such appreciation.

"Oh, it ain't me; it's the organization," he

protested. "Every feller that belongs to it knows that to get the benefits there has got to be a Boss."

"But why are *you* Boss? What is the magic you employ?" Womanlike, she ascribed his dominance to personality, to individual power, ignoring, or disdaining, the institution and the conditions that support the institution.

"Why me?" echoed McBride in some surprise. "Why, because I fill the bill, I guess. It was fought to a finish years ago, and since I cleaned out Tim Murphy in the Tenth Ward, the boys have all been unanimous for peace and harmony. My word goes everywhere, see? If there wasn't no call for bosses, there wouldn't be none. And if the organization was run like a reform meetin', where each yap that wants to can make a holler, the boys would have to be after seekin' other bizness openin's, I guess. They know that."

"Yet organization, important as it is, is not all," Mrs. Corlis contended. "An engine, however perfect, requires steam to keep it going."

McBride's intellect seized the concrete comparison.

"I should say it did," he agreed. "And don't you forget it, I give 'em steam, regular, every hour. How'd it go, if I let up for a day, I'm askin'. Men are born a lazy lot and you've got

to prod 'em up, right along. That's why they need a Boss."

"There is little doubt but that Chicago enjoys one," observed Mr. Corlis, facetiously.

"I don't mean there should," rejoined the Boss with grimness. "It wouldn't do. Them fellers has got to know for certain in their minds where orders comes from or the spokes'd fly out all 'round quicker than a fire alarm goes off."

"They know—rest assured they know," chuckled Mr. Corlis, "and you don't use any feather in hammering the notion into their heads at that, McBride."

The Boss smiled pleasantly, and, on further thought, deemed it necessary to offer some apology for the lady's sake.

"I hope I ain't as bad as them reformers and newspaper fellers make me out, Mrs. Corlis. There's a lot of people who don't know what it is to be in politics—that's what the matter is. They're ignorant, they are. Suppose I undertook to teach 'em how to run their department stores, their banks and newspapers, they'd set up an almighty howl, I'm tellin' you. They'd say I was an ignorant cuss and a vulgar plug-ugly, and all those other choice pet names they keep on ice especially for me."

"But you can afford to ignore abuse," Mrs.

Corlis said consolingly. "Everybody, nowadays, expects to be assailed."

"Well, I don't mind none at all what they say about me in connection with the organization," declared McBride. "That's part of what's comin' to you in the bizness, I guess. What raises my hair ain't that at all—it's for them college fellers and literary yaps a-sayin' in their lives of me how I was born an illiterate Irishman and have stayed so up to date. It ain't the lies, I'm tellin' you, 'tis the truth about a feller that stings like pepper in the eyes."

"So much the more credit to you for making yourself what you are, Mr. McBride," asserted his hostess, quickly and with feeling.

"That don't help none," he dissented dolefully. "It's true, that's the worst of it. When I begun life I was only an Irishman, and now I've sent my boys to college and helped make 'em gentlemen, and then them reformers go and make a shame of me to my sons. Beggin' you'll excuse me, Mrs. Corlis, I hope, if there's to be any of them dum reformers up in heaven, I'll be put out before I get let in."

"I'm hanged if I blame you!" exclaimed Mr. Corlis.

"Nor I," declared his wife with equal emphasis.

And she related how her own father had come

up from the bottom and had managed, somehow, to educate himself between labors. She spoke of the struggle of his youth, its deprivations and its sacrifices, and of how meager were his first successes. And as she recounted the story, so common in America, she directed now and then a challenging glance at Mr. Corlis, realizing that nothing was to him so distasteful as the publication of the rural origin of her family, although in private he was not above taunting her, occasionally, with her plebeian blood and explaining thereby some of her idiosyncrasies.

But McBride refused the sympathetic palliation.

"That's good to hear, Mrs. Corlis; but the Senator's different from me. He ain't illiterate and he ain't Irish, no matter how hard up he was born. I'm that proud of my Irish, though—when it's put as it ought, as an honor and not as a slur. A boss's a boss, though I ain't sayin' it's bad as a bizness. But a senator's a statesman and ornamental to the country. And I'll say this for Senator Dawes, though he's fought me bitter for fifteen years—he's a man his state honors; he's the 'grand old man' of Illinois."

Mrs. Corlis glowed; the dearest pride she confessed was her father's fame.

"I thank you, Mr. McBride, for your generous tribute, and I am confident that when I let my

father know how beautifully you have spoken of him, he will be greatly pleased. Indeed, if you will allow me to speak frankly, I am more than half persuaded it is my duty to make you two good friends. A woman is a natural mediator, is she not?"

Praise of his chivalry in speaking well of his enemy had warmed the cockles of his Irish heart; but, when she suggested mediation, she touched his shrewdness. The Boss smiled a different smile as he looked again at her and hung his head a little to one side.

"That's appertainin' to politics, I guess, and bizness ain't related to good feelin'. I've enjoyed the best of feller-feelin' for some friends of mine I meant to rip up the back the next election day. Same now with the Senator. He's fought the organization with every weapon for the last ten year, and he never would consent to let me set down at the national dinner table. Personal feelin' is all for you, Mrs. Corlis, but I ain't foot loose. I'm tied up by my duty to the organization."

"But has not the time about arrived for a new deal all around?" suggested Mr. Corlis softly.

"Has it?" replied the Boss, dubiously.

"I trust so," Mrs. Corlis stated. "At least I'm hopeful that much misconstruction on both sides may be removed and that old enmities may

die. And I am certain, Mr. McBride, your words to-night of respect for my father's services and character will go far towards obliterating in his mind the effect of years of misunderstanding and misrepresentation fomented by your enemies and kept alive by parties interested in keeping you two apart. He has learned, I know, to respect your resolution and abilities, Mr. McBride, and he estimates most highly the influence that you wield."

McBride cleared his throat.

"Humph, I'm dead willin', Mrs. Corlis," he announced. "I don't cherish no hard feelin's against the Senator, myself, and I'd extend him the glad hand to-morrow mornin' sure, and promise him the backin' of the organization where he'd most want it, if he'd agree to stand in with us for good, and see we got our share down at Springfield, and steer us up around to the White House whenever we wanted to pay a call. The trouble up to date has been, Mrs. Corlis, and I don't blame him none for it, the Senator was in politics for glory and he never would consent to hear we wasn't in it for our health."

IV

MR. CORLIS ON POLITICS

LUXURIOUS inclination made of Mr. Corlis a lazy animal, except when aroused by the pleasures of society or the greed of gain. Normally he remained a drowsy force; at intervals he became a whirlwind of energy. In such intense periods his great powers were used with concentration, in order to dispatch the business finally and with effect, and to enable himself to live at ease again.

He sauntered into his wife's room after the Boss had gone. She was idly turning over the leaves of a French novel, while she waited for her maid. She looked up to welcome him with a smile, but he made no articulate response until he had elaborately stretched himself out at full length upon the sofa. There, lying on his back, he puffed milky rings of smoke upward at the ceiling and drawled an occasional observation at his wife.

Many of their conferences were conducted in this manner. Mrs. Corlis liked them for the intimacy they entailed. And while he looked at noth-

ing, or the ceiling, she looked at him, admiring at her leisure the vigor of his manhood—the deep curve of his chest, the well-shaped limbs, his sinewy neck, the high arch of the head, the gray tinting of his features with their marmorean surfaces.

"Rather regal you are to-night, Victoria," he remarked, his eyes at a point of the ceiling. "Diamonds and other trappings—all for McBride!"

"Pearls before swine, you mean? Oh, I fancy not. What most impresses a barbarian, Walter?"

"Exactly, Victoria—you produced the effect intended; you succeeded. The Boss regards you as the Queen of Sheba, or, in his vernacular, the whole thing." He turned his head to glance at her. "What is your game?"

"Why do you ask," she rejoined, "since you know as well as if I had explained it to you specifically?"

"Merely because I wondered if the Senator had actually sent you out to rig up a treaty with McBride," said Mr. Corlis, so drily it might have been a sneer. "The 'grand old man' of Illinois—humph, he should be dubbed the sly old fox! Pardon me, I know you dislike to have me speak flippantly of the Anointed of the Lord." He chuckled, turned back his head and blew a vast cloud ceilingward.

She ignored the pain his words caused her, but she hastened to deny the imputed fact.

"I assure you, Walter, the Pater has not the least idea of this. It has not even occurred to him to so much as mention the name of Mr. McBride to me or in my presence."

"Then why, allow me to ask," responded her husband coolly, "do you talk as you do to McBride, if you cannot speak authoritatively? Excuse me, but you only misrepresent the Senator, and, to use the slang, put him in a hole with McBride. Besides, your method is not well considered; for if you want to influence the Boss, you must be prepared with substantial propositions. McBride is only sentimental on top; at bottom he's a cool trader."

Mr. Corlis' tone was disinterested.

"I confess it is altogether my own scheme," admitted Mrs. Corlis, almost crestfallenly—"but I have thought it all out, Walter, and there is no other way."

Mr. Corlis bit hard on his cigar.

"If the old fox hasn't lost his patriarchal cunning, he'll see that as well as you," he muttered, perhaps reluctantly.

Again her eyes showed, momentarily, how his phrase hurt; but she repressed her impulse to protest in order to explain.

"Since Governor Ransom and the Pater split

on this wretched silver question, Walter, the old combination that has worked well so long, no longer holds. Consequently the Pater must find a compensation for the loss of Egypt, and where can he hope to balance it unless here in Chicago?"

"It needs no marvelous penetration to discover that," said Mr. Corlis.

She spoke eagerly,

"The Pater must be reëlected, Walter. He has had five terms in the Senate and has twice been governor. He is an old man now, and if he loses, it will break his heart. He deserves a reëlection at the hands of the state he has served so faithfully, and, you know, the Senate chamber has become like home to him. If he is not returned he will be crushed; he'll die within a year."

"No need of melodrama about it in the least, Victoria," advised Mr. Corlis lazily. "The probabilities all favor him. He knows a trick or two; he's up to every device known in the game; he's slippery and surpassingly smooth. No man can say he has ever beaten 'Uncle Simeon' yet, although many have been certain they would get his brush before the old fox ran to cover. He has always had the laugh on them."

The levity of the characterization was too much for Mrs. Corlis.

"Don't, Walter, don't, I implore! Have you no least reverence for age and reputation?"

Mr. Corlis writhed gently on the sofa and puffed jets of smoke in his delight.

"I know you believe the Senator is a great man. Pure family pride, Victoria! True, I must admit that as a deft old hand at politics he has skinned all his contemporaries—the scalps of his rivals adorn his belt. But, I fancy, he is now a trifle out of date; getting a bit obsolete, you know. However, in his heyday your distinguished father was the cock of the walk, there's no denying that."

"You are a denying spirit, Walter; your tongue belittles everything," asserted Mrs. Corlis, with some indignation. "The Pater is no mere politician; were he to die to-morrow, he would be ranked as one of the statesmen of the nation."

"Certainly, Victoria, his fame would be secure," agreed Mr. Corlis, in a most correct tone. "Tom Reed defined a statesman as 'a politician dead twenty years.' Occasionally even, a politician may get canonized before he's dead. The Senator, perhaps, is such an one. He has kept himself in office forty years and never once been out; he has known how to get on the right side of every question that has come up, and every parlous issue he's side-stepped. Then consider what an artist he has been at helping rising men to power and at using their gratitude to boost himself. When, in turn, they reached the end of their

rope and lost their grip, he knew how promptly to forget them. Oh, the Senator's a bird!"

"Walter!"

She was wounded to the heart, yet for her life she could not help smiling.

Her husband turned his head far enough to catch her smile. He was emboldened.

"Now, there is your old-time friend and quondam lover, Governor Ransom; his case'll serve to adorn my moral and point my tale. Who helped Ransom up, I say? Senator Dawes, to be sure. Who reëlected Uncle Simeon to the Senate six years ago? Governor Ransom—whom would you expect? Ransom is finishing his second term as governor, and how is he now? About to join the company of defunct politicians and ancient lights, I take it, along with Sam Thurston and Black Dan Hawkins and E. S. Blodgett, and all the rest that your doughty 'Uncle Simeon' has gloriously survived, you bet."

Mr. Corlis tossed himself emphatically upon the sofa and his wife felt, herself, as if the last word had been said.

Presently, however, she ventured in rather an apologetic voice,

"Politics must have its dark side, I suppose, but why insist upon seeing that side alone? Dirty work, as they call it, is a necessity in everything; it is an element even in the church, I'm told."

"Naturally," he responded. "The unique distinction of politics, however, is that all the work is dirty—dirty work without a chance for heroics. High statesmanship's a myth, like many other bombastic things. The trouble is, you women never know the world, the world as it is—not even you, Victoria." He sent his wife an admiring glance, perhaps in amends for his iconoclasm.

She was appreciative, even as nowadays she was thankful for an occasional caress from the man she loved. She smiled back into his eyes.

"Maybe, Walter; but it is well for you men some of us women can retain our illusions of life."

"Ah, that's another proposition." Mr. Corlis dismissed the discussion with a chuckle.

Suddenly he swung his feet to the floor and sat up, his jaw seeming very square and his forehead unusually high. He looked intently towards his wife.

"I'll tell you who is needed now, Victoria, who is the man of the time. It is the manager. Every dog his day! The day for the orator and 'peepul'"—he used the exact pronunciation of the Senator—"is done. The rhetorical Pharisee no longer has the old-fashioned pious constituency to which to make his appeal; it does not exist. Chicago is a long ways off from Yankeedom, and the agriculturists themselves, nowadays, are 'on the make.'" He smiled a trifle grimly as well as with

his wonted superciliousness. "I'll tell you what, Victoria, if you are bent on reëlecting your father, you had better settle with me. I am *the man.*"

He cast her a look of power, then got slowly to his feet, stretching out his muscular arms in graceful abandon. Mrs. Corlis thought of the yawn of a beautiful tiger.

"Then you will aid me, Walter? You must. It is in the family, you know, and Uncle Johnny is interested."

He glared at her suddenly. Something like a snarl came into his voice.

"I must, must I? I am the family's humble servant, I suppose; the serviceable catspaw to drag the chestnuts out of the fire, whenever your distinguished father and your opulent uncle command."

She soothed his injured susceptibility.

"You mistake, Walter dear. We greatly need your help, that is all. All of us recognize your power. Uncle Johnny often talks to me of your exceptional talent for handling men, especially of the McBride type; he credits you with a positive genius for that sort of thing."

Mr. Corlis allowed himself to be easily mollified, and, perceiving how much he relished praise of this sort, she continued to please him. He never allowed his vanity to intrude upon practical business, and few who came in contact with the

cool, adroit man of affairs had suspected how much he indulged his vanity at home. No small part of his intimate association with his wife was consumed in rehearsals of his achievements and his projects. She listened and admired always; indeed, her constant appreciation constituted her single hold upon him.

Now, in an enthusiasm of self-love, skillfully directed to the attainment of a concrete end, he crossed the room to his wife and stood over her. Her dark eyes, looking up into his face, expressed her pride in him.

"Victoria," he declared, "if I can influence McBride, you can twist Mr. Jarrett around your finger twice. *Do ut des,* as was Bismarck's motto. I will engage to have the Senator endorsed in the Convention, if you will interest your Uncle Johnny in my new scheme. Is it a go?"

"What a veritable Jew you are!" she protested, laughing, but with avowed acquiescence in whatever he might desire in her eyes. He was so compelling when he was in earnest, and it was that compulsion that she loved. Moreover, she welcomed anticipatively the association this new partnership would bring her, knowing well that to share his mind and ambitions constituted her main and single chance with him.

"Let me tell you," he commenced. He touched her knees and gesticulated about her head as he

talked. He sketched the project for whose support he desired the credit and capital of J. J. Jarrett. His strokes were swift and vigorously precise. His grasp, his cold enthusiasm, fixed his wife's imagination. The glimpses afforded into the complicated machinery of a vigorous mind affected her more powerfully than even the magnitude of the plan itself, masterly as was its presentation and daring as appeared its scope.

The cold electricity propelled from the great schemer's brain, entering her nerves, was transformed into emotion. And to her ardent sympathy Mr. Corlis opened the bottom secrets of his mind, so that she recognized, with a gasp of terror as much as of astonishment, the vast ambitions crouching there like tense springs ready to uncoil. The projected combination he had outlined he meant should serve him for a pedestal; on it a future would be based, a future such as few would dare dream. The mastery of finance, the control of the commerce of America, perhaps politically the Presidency of the United States itself, were the finalities involved.

Against the magnitude of this adventuring ambition, this Napoleonic thought, the man loomed large to Mrs. Corlis—so large that quibbles concerning his rectitude suddenly appeared evidence of littleness in herself. His sheer dimensions reduced her sentimental questionings and her wom-

an's scruples to wretched ignobilities, for which she felt ashamed.

She had time to feel so much, before she was swept out upon seas illimitable under majestic skies. She lost consciousness of self, forgot morality, justice; his glory and his might absorbed, consumed her. She sprang to her feet.

"Walter, oh, Walter!" she cried, and flung herself upon him, kissing his hands and face in ecstasy.

With arms locked about his neck and leaning off, she perused the meaning of his countenance.

"I am your partner and your ally, something more than your mere wife. It is proved, since I demand no narrow moralities of you. What I demand is only that you be grander, prouder, more splendid than other men. And what is sweetest to me is that I can aid, not in wish and thought and prayer, but in actuality, in truth. Oh, I would slave and charm and almost cheat for you! I will make Uncle Johnny do what you wish. He shall, he must, or I am no niece of his!"

V

THE BOSS AT HOME

THE "Black Boss" sat at home in his own house, in the basement, in the dining-room, in a big, cane-bottomed chair, drawn close sideways to the table. He sat comfortably in his shirt-sleeves and thus exposed the power of his neck and shoulders and the depth of his paunch. A big, black cigar was set well in his mouth, while upon the table, scarcely cleared of the supper dishes, stood, directly at his elbow, a huge stein of German beer. Through the half-open kitchen door sounded the clatter of china, for his wife was "doing up the dishes" in the absence of the "hired girl" on a Sunday night.

The Boss, as he sat and ruminated, looked like a big, sad dog who needed a patting on the head. His amorphous black poll, his chaotic countenance, in which Celtic pathos and Celtic idealism indescribably mingled with so much dross, with such coarseness and such vulgar passion, indicated the powerful and contradictory personality of the man.

His immediate mood, however, was most equable, nay, even smugly self-congratulatory. He

was swaddled in Teutonic comfort, as it were. Perhaps the phlegmatic nature of his dissipation soothed his Celtic nerves, as the imported Munich beer dulled his elastic mind. His second marriage with a girl of German blood had introduced this salutary slowness into the mercurial currents of his blood. Thus, every Sunday night he sat at home, temporarily transformed into a great, squat, amiable burgher, sucking smoke and soaking beer.

No doubt the transformation contained a bit of deliberate politics—come to sift them, most things did with McBride. Since he had attained undisputed supremacy in the wards, it was expedient to become somewhat more of a mystery in the common mind; it no longer behooved him, as acknowledged Boss, to joke and drink and swear like any ordinary pot-house politician, in the saloons, or even in the side room off McMahon's Place in Clark street, although from thence went forth the decrees that ruled Chicago.

This particular Sunday night there was so little to bother him that he was inclined, as an indulgence along with the tobacco and the beer, to let his sentimentality run loose. The Corlis dinner, as Mr. Corlis had divined, had immensely flattered him and increased his self-respect. For, in spite of the coarse fibre of the man, he possessed the Irish itch after gentility.

So, as he sat, gorged with supper and irrigated

by beer, he chewed the sentimental cud of recollection. He gratefully remembered how, after dinner, while Mr. Corlis was out of the room, he had told his gracious hostess of his children and his wife. Could he not feel the tender sympathy of her dark eyes upon him still?

First of all he had told of his nearly grown sons, the children of his first wife, and to what insults and isolation they were subjected by their college mates, because they had for father a notorious Irish Boss and former "dive-keeper." After that he had let her learn something of his own poor attempts to retrieve his early disadvantages and to atone for the ignorance and brutality of his past; how he had engaged tutors to come to him for two hours in each day throughout four years of his most strenuous activity; how he had striven to acquaint himself with a little of English literature and of human history, and even taken lessons in art. Art he thought a talismanic word, which he used only on "swells" who had "cultured manners."

Now the sentimental tears filled his big, blue eyes, as he recalled how attentively she had listened to all he had had to say and how kind were the replies she had made.

He had concluded,

"But there's things can't be fixed up, Mrs. Corlis. I never can get the mark off of my bringin'

up in a saloon and my tendin' bar. They won't let no one forget. Even if I could rub the slate clean myself, they won't, them reformers. But for my boys it's different; I sent 'em to a swell school and I'm puttin' 'em through Harvard now. They'll come out gentlemen, my boys will—I ain't sparin' no expense. They'll be as good as the rest, and won't have nothin' to be ashamed of, when they get through, except me."

He had told Mrs. Corlis about his girl-wife, too, and the story seemed to take the lady even more than the story of his boys.

"Why can't they be decent and let up about who I married, anyhow?" he had asked with suppressed fierceness. "I'll commit murder on some of 'em yet. She never done nothin'; she is a small, weak creature, just a slip of a lass. I've got over mindin' what they sling at me, but it's worse'n dirty for 'em to insinuate about her in the daily columns of the newspapers. It ain't manly! It ain't Christian! If it wasn't for the organization, if I was foot loose, I'd go after some of 'em, I would.

"Why, Mrs. Corlis, little Gretchen ain't much more than a child. She never could protect herself, and until she found me, she didn't own a single friend in all the ugly world. It's true I took her off the street; but it weren't her fault any more than it was mine that I was born up over

a saloon instead of on Prairie Avenue. What do people who have enough to be good on and more, too, expect of a poor weak girl, who's naught but a child and pretty, and hungry half the time and badgered to death by every man that sets his eyes on her! But I give her a chance, Mrs. Corlis. I made her my wife, and she knows I'm between her and the world and that nothin' nor nobody can hurt her any more at all. She's got the chance and that was all she needed, I'm tellin' you. She's good and happy, and she goes to Mass every Sunday early, and there ain't no better wife nor mother in the city than my Gretchen."

It delighted the Boss, as he sat at home in his broad chair, to think how nobly he had spoken and how Mrs. Corlis in return had beamed upon him.

Had she not said,

"You are like a knight of old, Mr. McBride; you rescue women and you think well of us. That, I think, God will let atone for a multitude of deeds. I wonder if I may not help a bit? Sometimes I question what my social power is worth—social power seems a thing so idle. But you will let me call upon Mrs. McBride, and I should like to invite her to my house. As this world is made—it's cowardly—perhaps I can help you more in that way than in any other. And your wife shall like me; I'll make her like me."

Mrs. Corlis had displayed the enthusiasm of a generous child seized with a benevolent idea.

He remembered his own reply:

"But I'm sure it would scare little Gretchen 'most to death, Mrs. Corlis. She's a *hausfrau,* that's what she calls herself. She ain't built a bit for society, Mrs. Corlis, and seein' what she's been dragged through, she's satisfied enough to be locked up safe at home."

Of such recollections were the Boss's ruminations woven, until a familiar sound caused him to look up. His wife stood in the kitchen doorway, her arms, bare to the elbow, set daintily akimbo upon her hips.

"My, Mike, you do look comfortable; I'm so glad. I guess I'd better fill up your stein again before I come in."

She was a flaxen mouse of a woman, plump and sleek with happiness and good health. The oval contour of her Teutonic face was Madonnaesque; her skin was soft as a babe's, and in her hazel eyes dwelt security and peace, contented submission to a will she loved. What blundering fate had sent this simple creature, designed so obviously for wife and mother, adrift upon the pavements of a brutal city, the victim of carnal youth and obscene age!

She stole about the room so softly, her two long braids reaching below her waist; her face was

naturally demure and her eyes returned always to the burly figure in the cane-bottomed chair. Dog-like fidelity warmed each fond glance, fidelity of the sort that never questions and likewise never fails.

"Gretchen," the Boss grunted, between a draught of beer and a puff of tobacco, "how'd you like to know Mrs. Corlis?"

"My!" exclaimed Gretchen, sudden trepidation bringing to a stop her noiseless travels about the room.

"Well," announced McBride phlegmatically, "anyhow she's comin' to make a call on you."

"On me?" quavered Gretchen in alarm. "Oh, Mike, don't let her do it."

"Can't be helped, I guess. You're the wife of a somebody, you see; you can't help that. There's social requirements to the position, I'm tellin' you, that have got to be lived up to, somehow." He rumbled grandly, but there was a twinkle in his eye he would not let Gretchen see.

"But I—won't know what to do, Mike," she begged plaintively, standing before him, even her braids assuming a hopeless hang. "And she's such a high-toned lady for the like of me, Mrs. Corlis is. Please, please, do tell her not to come. Say I'm afraid. Be a good Mike."

"Oh, she's set her heart on it," McBride loftily explained. "She's got her plan, and all that's

left for us common folks is to fall in with it. She is set on invitin' you along with me to her palatial residence upon the Lake Shore Drive, and her mind's made up to extend my wife the glad hand socially."

"But I don't have to take it, do I?" wailed Gretchen in despair. "I won't have her here, snoopin' 'round, I won't. You can't bring no nasty politics inside here, Mike, to disturb our home." She flung her sobbing self on the Boss's ample breast, crying, "I won't have—no struttin' proud swell—airing her goodness—over me, I won't, I won't! I know my place—I do—and I wish people—higher up—'d keep to theirs. Don't make me, Mike, please don't! I won't love you no more, if you do—not one tiny bit, not a bit!"

"There, there!" McBride soothed her roughly, while his blue eyes danced. "Just think how proud it would make you, little woman. Think of the grand Mrs. Corlis rolling down the street in her open carriage, just to call on you. How all the neighbors would be jealous and how low they'd duck next day."

Gretchen suppressed her sobs to hear. Then commenced afresh,

"I won't—have her here—coming 'round and prying—just like those—Methodist women—and sniffing at my—oh, oh, at what—I used to be."

The vast arms went round her like protecting walls.

"Pooh! That needn't worry you none, poor child. She ain't that kind at all, Mrs. Corlis ain't. Sit up, now, on my knee, like a good, obedient girl, and wipe your pretty eyes, while Mike tells you what's what. There!—She's like me and other men, Mrs. Corlis is. She knows the world, I guess, and a bit of human nature. And that's a thing that knocks the ignorant discriminations out of man or woman, Gretchen, unless they're fools. From what I seen of her so far, I should judge that to be the Queen Society Bee ain't unlike bein' Boss of the Cook County organization. That's my opinion. Either of us, Mrs. Corlis or me, has got to take the world as it comes along, and not raise no holler because it ain't as we'd have put it up, if we'd had the packin' instead of God. And, if anybody's askin', to try to get along with every mother's son amounts, before you end, to a lot of charity or near it. So, I'm tellin' you, you ain't got no kick comin', Gretchen, about Mrs. Corlis callin'. She won't make you afraid, even if she is the first Chicago lady and a queen all over the land. I'll go you a bet, she'll turn out the best friend you ever had."

So Gretchen, having dried her eyes on her husband's shirt sleeves, allowed herself to be com-

forted. Soon, indeed, she was pressing exhaustive inquiries. Finally—

"And her husband, Mr. Corlis?—Gard says she used to know him. What's he like?"

"Corlis? Oh, he's smart, and he thinks he's a dum sight smarter than he is," McBride answered. "But he has got to show me, yet, it ain't J. J. Jarrett's millions that made him—he's got to show me that. Still, Corlis is pretty cute, pretty cute he is."

VI

HILDEGARDE BROWN

GRETCHEN slipped from her lord's knee. "It's the back door," she said, "and I guess it's Gard."

She went into the kitchen. McBride heard the unlocking of the door, followed by shrill feminine greetings.

"Come and see Mike," Gretchen prattled. "He has lots to say, and he always likes to hear you go on, he says."

She appeared in the doorway, an arm stretched back to tug her visitor.

"Here's Gard, Mike."

"Good," the Boss grunted, hospitably.

Gard was tall and angular. Her frame was broad, but she was thin through front to back. Her long limbs might have made her awkward, but her swiftness saved her, lending her not grace, but the aspect of grace. The paradox extended to her features, which were aquiline, keen, the articulations all edged, as it were, while the dark gray eyes glittered like steel points; yet the skin which clothed these sharpnesses was fair, with the texture of velvet and satin both.

Therefore her face, had it not been so indis-

putably incisive, might have been charged with being tender. For, despite its underlying hardness, no mean lines nor bitter, no small line of spite, appeared at the nostrils or around the mouth. Indeed, the lips, edged though they were and resolute, had inner curves, and the lower lip, at its middle, hung a bit. Finally, her hair was pale gold, like the aureole of a saint, and it flowed about her temples and on her neck in shining streamers with gleaming eddies. Had Saint Michael been a woman, he would have been such a woman as Gard looked.

"Hello, Gard," was the succinct greeting of the Boss. "How's biziness?"

"I'm still cheating the public," flashed Gard's answer. Her clear voice, low as it was, pained the ear-drums, it was so distinct. "And you, I suppose you're still skinning the people."

She ended with an infectious laugh. It came like silver chimes after the cutting clearness of her talking tones.

"Pretty strong language, Gard, as usual," commented the Boss, with an answering roar. "I'm mighty certain you find it pays as much as I do," he added when his laughter ceased.

"Can't say I do," she retorted. "The investing public is pretty smart, you know; but your victims, the patriotic people, they relish being gold-bricked."

"Why don't you drop promotin' then and go into politics with me? I'd make a man of you, a winner, too."

He put forth the idea to draw the lightning which delighted him.

He succeeded.

"Not much. I might steal from a millionaire, but I wouldn't touch your dirty revenue, McBride."

Did the Boss flinch? Underneath his leathern visage a dull red appeared.

"But what if I showed you a clean graft, Gard, profits that'd make Jay Gould's mouth water, all in a way that wouldn't make no deacon sneeze?"

"I thought you thought Tweed a big stiff, and copied Croker."

"That's right; you've got it. But what I'm talkin' is a brand new deal, my girl. It ain't no scheme to raid the City Treasury. It ain't no hold-up neither."

"Not another cinch on the gamblers, eh?"

"Not on your life. It ain't no such thing. It's bizness, simon pure. I furnish the pull, my side partners the dough—and I guess we can bake a cake between us. But what I'm askin', Gard, is your office, noons, to meet in, until after the election bizness's over."

"I guess it's pretty nearly yours, McBride, since you just about support it, as it is."

"Oh, I'll let you in on the ground floor of the deal."

"Thanks; perhaps I won't want to be let in."

"Humph, you won't be so dum coy when I tell you who's the people—W. H. D. Corlis and J. J. Jarrett!" McBride looked triumphant.

Gard stiffened as with death, and her expression locked. After a moment she said quietly,

"No, I don't care to be mixed up with that crowd. I know what their names mean."

The Boss had watched her narrowly. He waved a hand.

"Well, I can have the office, anyway, can't I?"

"Of course."

"And when you feel you want to, any old time, Gard, you can get in at the basement, even if we're goin' up ten stories every month."

"I won't want," said Gard.

"Why do you flare up so, or I guess it's freeze, whenever Mr. Corlis' name is mentioned in the conversation?" asked the Boss.

"None of your confounded business, McBride, if you want to know."

McBride exploded.

Gretchen purred approvingly.

"You do Mike such a heap of good, Gard, darling. It takes you, Sunday nights, to stir him up."

Gard irrelevantly demanded,

"But what I want to know, McBride, is who you're going to nominate for governor. Got anyone cropped out yet?"

"What do you want to know for?" growled the Boss.

"Because I've got a friend, a reporter on *The Pundit,* outside, waiting on the corner," announced Gard, her eyes burning despite herself.

"Oh, you have, have you?" grunted McBride. "You must think I've turned fool over night."

"Well, you can lie about it, can't you?" she retorted, "enough for him to hang a story on. I never knew you to hesitate about lying when it served your ends, and I guess it won't hurt you any to lie once in a righteous cause."

The Boss's face was wreathed in smiles.

"Humph, who's your friend outside? It ain't hospitable to leave him to cool his shins."

"Oh, it's a warm night," said Gard. "His name's Ruggles."

Her voice lingered on the name and there was shyness in her keen face.

"Chris Ruggles of *The Pundit?* I know him. Let him inside."

Gard moved to comply.

"And you volunteered to get him an interview, did you?" asked McBride. "Well, I like your nerve."

"It won't hurt you," she rejoined, with char-

acteristically defiant humor. "You don't want to play the clam too much or people will get to thinking you aren't wise as an owl, but only dumb as an oyster. That wouldn't be good for your business."

"I'll tell him something, if you'll let him in," agreed the Boss, as if he felt the force of the remark.

The two women went through the kitchen to fetch the reporter. Meantime the Boss ruminated and rumbled a little to himself.

McBride shook the newspaper man heartily by the hand.

"I think we know each other pretty well, if anybody's askin'," he said. "And you know, Ruggles, I never talk none. But Gard here says I've got to."

"He'll tell you all about it, Mr. Ruggles," Gard announced shrilly. "Just you keep at him. He's got it all rigged up beforehand. The Convention's set to go off like a patent alarm clock at the hour wanted. He's told each speaker exactly how much he can say and when he's to sit down. The names of the nominees are stuck in his vest pocket snug up to his own fat self there."

All laughed together, the Boss with them.

"I am the only one alive who dares twist the lion's tail," continued Gard, her eyes exultant.

"Come, McBride," she bade, "tell Mr. Ruggles whom you've ticked off to head the slate."

"Humph! to hear you goin' on, people'd suppose I was the whole thing in Illinois," demurred McBride. "I'm only interested a bit in Chicago politics, Ruggles, you know."

"Anyway, Mike was to dinner last night at the Corlis's," announced Gretchen, triumphantly.

She had been bursting for an opportunity to tell it, and this seemed to her as good an occasion as any.

The Boss shot a glance at the reporter.

"Don't put that in *The Pundit,*" he warned him.

"Certainly not, Mr. McBride."

"Good," the big fellow grunted.

"Now, I'm tellin' you, young man, I haven't been interviewed for the last two years, and if you're set on it, I want you to get exactly what I say without any of them frills you fellers stick on. I want to let them high-toners, them Puritans and silk-stockin's, who steal but never swear—I want to let 'em know exactly what I mean; but I don't want 'em sayin' what I didn't say. Are you on?"

The reporter took out paper and pencil and prepared to write upon his knee.

"Here, shove up to the table. And now mind, here's what I'll stand for: The Cook County organization ain't pledged to no man for neither

governor, nor senator, nor both. It's goin' into the convention a week from the comin' Tuesday, solid, and it's goin' to stay solid. It's goin' to look after its own interests first and last and all the time. The Cook County regular organization ain't only good Republican on election day, but good Republican between times. It's goin' to be recognized as such. The Cook County organization wants a man for governor who'll be polite to it when he gets down to Springfield as well as just before election day, and for senator it wants a man who won't be ashamed of it at Washington. That's all."

The Boss had spoken slowly, each word like a soft blow, and he had brought his fist down on the table silently after every word.

"Now read it over, my boy, and let's see how it sounds.—That'll do. When Senator Dawes and the rest of them fellers read that ultimatum in *The Pundit* to-morrow mornin', they'll get on to the fact I'm meanin' bizness. And, by holy smoke, I do."

"I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. McBride," the reporter said. "It will be an exclusive story for *The Pundit,* won't it?"

"I guess so, Ruggles, unless the other papers send their men over here to-night, and you can trust me I ain't a-goin' to look 'em up."

His blue eyes twinkled, seeming to admit the reporter into an enviable fellowship.

" 'Twas this way: you just happened to drop down on me when I'd about made up my mind, Gard helpin', it was about up to me to say a word. Well, I've said it, ain't I?—and mind, don't you change no word or fix it up—it wasn't no college professor who spoke it. Let it stand out naked; Chicago knows my style.—And now bizness is done, you and Gard draw up here, and Gretchen, she'll fill us up a stein apiece. Let's enjoy home life while we can, 's my sentiments."

Gard smiled gratefully at the Boss and made no more personal assaults upon him that night.

VII

THE OFFICE IN THE "OBELISK"

THE "Obelisk" rises in La Salle street to the height of seventeen stories. It projects, tower-like, above the tops of the adjacent buildings. Within, the floors and walls are tiled in white, while the offices are finished in hard woods and marble wainscoting. Banks, trust companies, estates, one or two great law firms, promoters of large enterprises, are the tenants of the building.

A visitor to the higher floors experiences an aërial sensation. The outer walls seem thin partitions against space, the windows are so wide and the piers between so narrow, that, looking out, he feels as if a stumble might precipitate him into midmost air, and, until custom reassures him, he is persuaded that he might as well be standing on the edge of a precipice, shielded from the abyss by only a fragile pane of glass. Then he remembers that through the body of the structure runs a network of steel beams and girders, a hidden skeleton, and his knowledge of the architectural secret stands him in place of the assurance of the eye.

An office door upon the fifteenth floor has

painted on its clouded glass black letters which read, "H. Brown—Mineral Properties—Stocks and Bonds—Investments."

The offices comprise a suite of rooms, the innermost of which has a private entrance opening into the hall near the elevators. That door is unlettered and holds no glass, nor could any one suspect that it opened into offices to be reached publicly only through two corridors.

The innermost office of the suite, possessing this side entrance, enjoys a wide south front of windows, which for the purposes of light, at least, renders it but a recess far up the face of a cliff. The business character of the room is indicated by the large mahogany roll-top desk, and at its farther end by a long table set about with ten straight-backed chairs, all of a pattern, evidently for the use of a meeting of the directors of companies. The room, in addition, is furnished somewhat richly: the carpet underfoot is thick; four good pictures are suspended on the walls; a bronze clock ticks from its place on the mantel-piece; brass andirons occupy the fireplace; there are three or four luxurious chairs and a sumptuous leather-covered lounge.

The outer offices are devoid of ornament. A number of flat-topped desks for clerks fill the space behind the wooden bar, which rails the passage to the inner room. Two typewriters, screwed

to tables, are constantly clicking under the industrious taps of two young women. A huge safe protrudes from one wall. An office boy sits near the outer door, and when not attending to the wants of callers, is forever licking stamps to envelopes.

Hildegarde Brown, in a high-backed swivel chair placed before her roll-top desk, was enabled to swing half about and put her feet upon the low window sill or the steam pipes just beneath the sill, and so look out upon the uneven roofs and the sheer gulfs between which compose the landscape offered by the business quarter of Chicago. At that altitude, in that rectangular, perpendicular world, dwelt peace, as much peace as is possible in an enormous modern industrial city—the peace of the upper air.

She often turned thus from her work and sat half-hours through, gazing across the irregular planes of the high roofs, penetrating downwards in the chasms of the streets, idly noting the belch of steam and smoke from a hundred painted iron chimneys. To her it seemed somewhat of an Alpine prospect, grandiose if not grand.

She had ample leisure, or she made it. Her business was an affair of wits. She thought and talked and issued orders to the clerical force without.

"It's a regular Irish business," she often de-

clared to McBride. "You people are a success at everything but work and I've caught it from you by contagion. The police force or some City Hall job, that's what fits the Irish, where imagination doesn't damage any and they aren't kilt perspirin'."

In the last few words she mimicked the Boss's speech to perfection.

Gard swung slowly in her chair, and glancing out of the window, observed to her visitor, after her own peculiar fashion,

"What a deal of deviltry those roofs we see conceal! By Jingo, I'd cut Chicago to-morrow afternoon and hunt a hole in some clean, stupid place, but I'm certain that before twenty-four hours had elapsed, positively I'd miss the hellishness. Life has a gait to it here; Chicago may be brutal, may be ugly, but it's got a hustle to it, all the same."

Her vehemence neither shocked, surprised, nor caused her visitor to smile. The humorous recipiency of Christopher Ruggles was indeed small, hardly to be tickled by any provocation, while as for being shocked, he had too long ago shaken the last dust off his feet upon what he styled "respectabilities." Lastly, as to surprise, no friend of Gard Brown could afford to be surprised.

Ruggles was a serious, perhaps a solemn looking personage. In expression he was sombre, with

a sombreness that not long ago had been gloom, and the patient look of his sad blue eyes betokened some catholic acquaintance with grief. His body, though vigorous, was clumsily made, and his big feet, as he moved them, seemed heavy to lift and were certainly heavy when set down. His dark brown hair was thick, his beard square-cut and shot with red. The full brows above the brooding eyes denoted intellectuality, and the whole face had much in it of the granitic character of the New England race. It was the granite of endurance, however, rather than the rock of aggression. The man, indeed, looked baffled, though not beaten, and there showed in his eyes a wonder, as if he were constantly called upon to marvel at experience, which daily revealed such a fund of unsuspected meanness in men, and such a capacity for brutality in nature.

In truth, Ruggles inevitably, by reason of his higher qualities, his conscientiousness, his austere searching after truth, and his lack of self-conceit, must find life hard. The resiliency which adventurers possess, the compensation which humor affords, were benefits unknown to him.

Perhaps Gard Brown, child of the practical life though she was, divined mistily these characteristics and what must be their consequences to her friend. At any rate, her instinct from the first had been to protect him. The glance she ever

met him with was in part solicitous. She, who was conventionally uneducated, had what Stevenson has called "the superstition of letters." And her keen perception—a special gift of women—recognized in Ruggles the presence of a real intellect. It touched her compassion as well as her sense of the disorder which constitutes society, that this man of thirty-five, superbly educated, highly gifted, with so sincere a devotion to duty, should be unable to find a use for his talent and should fulfill no higher function than that of a reporter on the Chicago *Pundit*.

She swung her chair from the window to face him. She asked what he thought of McBride.

"You seemed to like him last night," she said. "The Boss is at least a genial sinner."

"I haven't the least doubt that he possesses the primitive virtues," answered Ruggles gravely. "He is certainly more pleasant to interview than a good many reformers. That is always it,"—the reporter smiled in a removed and wintry way,—"good motives don't improve one's charm."

"Well, I'd rather trust McBride than some." Her gray eyes flashed beautifully. "I hate a Pharisee; I hate a Pharisee! And respectable people have such mean sins, contemptible deals they won't acknowledge to themselves—things that a pirate like McBride wouldn't stoop to. I've got so I don't look for saints any more. And, since I'm

sitting in the game, I follow the rules along with the rest of the boys and I don't care what the respectabilities think of it."

"What they think depends eventually upon how far you succeed," said Ruggles.

"And I don't like saints either," continued Gard in her reckless fashion. "I've lost my taste for them. Unregenerate human nature is good enough for me. To love, to hate, to dare, to protect what one loves and to be generous—that may not be very developed; but I like it better than the pale passions of these complicated fish. These righteous people who automatically stop loving when the loved one proves not worthy, and who only hate a bad principle but never a 'good' man!"

She got to her feet and stamped once or twice to emphasize her disdain.

Ruggles was used to these scenes. It cannot be said that he enjoyed them, but knowing Gard for what she was, he may be supposed to have discounted them.

He rose.

"I must go, Gard. It's past noon now, and, you know, I'm required to report to the paper at half past one, and get my lunch besides."

"I would go to lunch with you," she declared, "but you heard McBride say last night he'd be

in here about noon. Good-by. Come in to-morrow, the same time if you can."

She had followed Ruggles to the outer office. As she stopped and turned to bid a stenographer come into her room to take some dictation, the office boy at her elbow said,

"A gentleman to see Mr. McBride."

Gard looked up and blanched to her lips. Was it terror that for a moment usurped the clear confidence of her eyes? She shrank the merest fraction of a second, then sprang erect again, while a look of intensity rushed into her face and set a rigid hardness there.

She sped one anxious glance toward Ruggles to note if he had seen; he was blessedly oblivious, involved in his own dream. But Mr. Corlis, following her glance from the corner of his eye, recorded a mental note, which might or might not some day prove valuable, he surmised. Ruggles he recognized as the reporter who had interviewed him for *The Pundit* two or three times.

This passed most briefly. Then the eyes of magnate and business woman locked for a second like dueling foils. Two spots of scarlet burned in Gard's cheeks and her nervous hand gripped hard on the knob of the door she held. Otherwise she was very still.

"You wish to see Mr. McBride?" she asked.

"If I may," he rejoined, coolly, with the in-

different ease of the man of the world. "Mr. McBride made an appointment with me here."

"It's all right," she assured him in a tone of business. "If you will walk into the private office and be seated, he will join you through the other door in a few minutes, I am sure. Do you care to wait?"

"Thank you, I'll wait," replied Mr. Corlis, walking past her into the room.

Gard closed the door upon him and went about matters in the outer office that demanded attention.

VIII

J. J. J.

JOHN JAMES JARRETT, familiarly referred to by his admiring or envious fellow-citizens as J. J. J., was a very plain American. He wore, perpetually, baggy trousers and an old gray slouch hat, and, until his identity became too well known to be mistaken, he preferred traveling in the common coach along with the rest of the public. It enabled him, for one thing, to discuss politics and affairs with whosoever shared his seat. In that manner, he declared, one could meet a cattleman from the Southwest, a wheat farmer from up in the Dakotas, a shoe drummer from New England and a coal operator from the Hocking valley, and pick up more pertinent information in a half-day's chat than could be learned from forty newspapers and a dozen magazines.

Of late years, however, such indulgence had been impossible. J. J. J. had become too well known. His unique personality was unmistakable, so much so that before ten sentences had been exchanged, some numskull was sure to remark,

"Excuse me, sir, but you're the everlasting photograph of that old skinflint, J. J. Jarrett, big bug of the Transcontinental and Pacific."

Whereupon J. J. J. would cholerically retort, "No, I ain't, you fool; I'm the old skinflint himself."

Thus was he forced against his inclination to the seclusion of his private car, on his continental journeyings between New York and Chicago, Washington and Denver. His home, legally, was in Denver, where he had built himself, as a sort of proclamation of the fact, a great house. But he was seldom at home. His wife had been dead so long that she had passed from his memory and, except his niece, he had no kin. In literal truth he was a wanderer in the fashion possible to a modern millionaire. He inhabited his car, and he preferred to have the wheels forever moving under him. Motion stimulated his brain, he thought; at least he was sure that it relieved his melancholy.

"What is the difference between me and a tramp?" was one of his jokes. "The tramp rides on a truck underneath and I upon the platform on top."

Mrs. Corlis had listened to that jest four hundred times.

He was a strange man, the world declared, and verily he looked the part. His short body was

foreshortened by his breadth, though little flesh lay upon the frame. His chest was the bellows for a giant and his arms had a gorilla's length, his hands a gorilla's tenacity. The head fitted to this peculiar body was picturesque. The forehead was like a wall and from its summit backward the straight brown hair, thickly streaked with gray, descended like a royal mane between big, out-cropping ears to the velvet collar of his coat.

The countenance beneath that Periclean expanse of forehead contained crude force in blocks. What it expressed besides was a genius for duplicity. The jaw was massive, the cheekbones rugged, and the nose obtrusive, but the bristling eyebrows were curved ingenuously and the dark eyes themselves, brilliant as jewels, sharp as points of steel, were always on the watch.

Yet in the face was something more—something elusive, wistful, always unutterably sad. The mouth, fringed in the uneven beard, for all its terrible decision, was tender at times; the eyes, when their watch slept, soft as a poetic girl's.

It was a face, indeed, which, when not feared, men loved, they knew not why—a face that, had it not been a colossal doer's, would have been a great dreamer's. America and the West decided it must be the first.

J. J. J. stepped straight with no turning out of

the toes. Some wondered if an Indian strain were not crossed in his inheritance—so especially his enemies, whom he pursued until he had them down. Others, nearer to him, subject to the compulsion of his magnetic eyes, credited him with the intensity of some passionate race, Jewish, perhaps, or Spanish. In fact, he was half Yankee and half what America styles Scotch-Irish, and, if the Celtic quarter contributed subtlety and fervor, the three-fourths Saxon supplied him with poise and iron.

He was a son of the West beyond the Mississippi. He had succeeded first upon the "Coast" and then in Colorado. With a fortune of twenty millions, dug from the mines, at his back, he had gone into railroads. He flung lines of steel across empty states; he distributed farms; he planted towns. The same genius that mastered the commercial geography of the West, applied to war, had made a Sherman or a Kitchener. He forecasted futures, he discounted time, he stretched his rails along strategic routes and knit the Great Plains to the Western Ocean.

The master of a gigantic system, with a hundred and fifty millions to his credit, J. J. J. developed a third and final phase. He forced himself into that small coterie who wield billions as their weapons; who seek to control the whole American product; who by the power derived

from mechanical invention and directed through perfected organization, would rear, consciously or unconsciously, inside the Republic, an industrial and commercial despotism capable of dominating the globe.

Through these successive transformations of his life, J. J. J. preserved his individuality unchanged. He remained a simple man of simple habits, a Westerner in manner, in his democracy, and even in his sentimentality. In truth, the man was so original that he could not conform to the conventions of New York any more than formerly he had to those of San Francisco and of Denver. Unaccountable, unique, a dreamer among realists, a melancholy muser upon life's verities, a thinker without education or a knowledge of books, he surpassed men of imagination in the magnificence of his projects and astonished mere financiers by the celerity with which he reduced visions into facts of steel and steam.

J. J. J. reached Chicago Tuesday morning. He came over the Northwestern in his second private car, the "Swiftsure."

When his carriage drew up in front of the Corlis house, he was welcomed by the sight of the pride of his heart standing at the top of the steps before the great arch of the entrance door.

How quickly the ungainly old man got out of the carriage and up the low, broad steps!

She leaned over him from her height and kissed his eyes, holding his bearded old face between her hands.

" Uncle Johnny, Uncle Johnny," she repeated; —it was all that she could say without bursting into tears.

" Child, child, my little Vicky," he cried in a rapture, and he held her off by his long arms and gloated over her.

She drew him into the house, saying,

" I am so glad to have you come. It always lets me feel so irresponsible, when you are on hand to take charge." She sighed.

Despite their difference of stature and of breeding, when together the nearness of their kin was recognizable. From his blood came her olive cheeks and speaking eyes; doubtless, too, her quick impetuosity which so often unexpectedly varied the processes of her calculations. Both had been guilty of originalities in their lives.

Continued scrutiny upon his part resulted in the question, " But are you feeling wholly strong, Victoria? "

She met his query impatiently; then dismissed it with her dazzling smile.

" Oh, it's only that we are growing old together, Uncle Johnny."

" No, no," he protested, not liking the notion. " You are to come after me, Victoria. You reap

where I have watered. I'm the rough ploughman; you, the dainty feaster."

But she turned the subject.

"Are you aware that I have not seen you since Christmas, Uncle Johnny? Do you call that being good to your one and only niece?"

"Ah, I have crossed the Sierras and the Rockies just to see my child's face; to learn from her lips if she wanted anything." His subtle countenance looked seraphic as he uttered these words.

She leaned a cheek against his shoulder.

"Snuggle me up close," she bade, "just as if I were a child. I'm so tired, awful tired, of playing the grand lady. You have no idea, Uncle Johnny, what a bore it's become. Why, it's only to you I can let down, and you only come twice a year. To the Pater I am a mental comrade, a sort of secretary to his mind, and to dear Walter I'm a helpmate, I suppose, though I do detest that term. Nobody that isn't serious has any use for me, Uncle Johnny—nobody but you. But to you I'm still your little girl, am I not, Uncle Johnny, and it's so restful, oh, you can't believe how restful."

That whole day the two spent together, uninterrupted except for the telegrams that pursued J. J. J. everywhere. It was one of his most common jokes that when St. Peter let him in the gate, the first angel he met would say, "You'll find your

telegrams awaiting you all right enough, Mr. Jarrett, half a block up, left hand side, the Golden Street."

The telegrams in sequence told of the break in Wall Street that had occurred the day before and was then developing into a "slump." Railway stocks had taken a sharp tumble and showed no signs of a rally anywhere. Besides the business telegrams there were those from friends he knew and from members of the public who knew him; they were angry or reproachful, many of them, stating that the senders of them had had trust in him, had invested in his properties or speculated according to his theories, and that now they had lost money or been ruined by reason of their faith in him.

The great manipulator grew depressed as the day lengthened and the telegrams increased. He had never been a ruthless man, except when he hated or where necessity demanded ruthlessness. Now he remarked to his niece, who leaned over his shoulder while he tore up a message,

"Sometimes I wonder, Vicky, if the essence of life is not cruelty. One can't put a foot down without dealing death. I never speculate; I only buy to bring together, to end factions, to bind weaknesses into one strength, in fact, to benefit the investors and ultimately the public we all serve. But I can't make a well-considered move, one

dictated by judgment and the most wholesome expediency, without hurting some poor man, some widow, some aged person. Yet if I stood still, more would suffer and others might bungle where I do well. Power is a fearful thing, Victoria, and if you are tired of your kind of success, upon my soul, I'd rather be driving a pick in a California gulch, as in the old days, than to be lashed every hour by this string of money I have got and that's got me. What's in it all for me, knowing, as I do, I can't stop without bringing down a crash, and I can't go on without treading upon fallen men? God knows I wish He had made His world upon a simpler plan!"

She hardly tried to comfort him; to do so would have been a vain thing, she knew. What comfort so strong a soul as J. J. J. got in this world he derived from himself; that was his distinction and his sorrow.

She sought instead to divert his attention to the matter of her father's reëlection, which she knew he had at heart. She explained the situation to him fully.

"You see the poor Pater has a stiff fight ahead of him," she ended. "It seems as if all the enemies he had ever made were, somehow, joined in league; they decry his abilities shamefully and they rake up all that ever happened or might have happened or that they wish had happened. It

appears very pitiful, doesn't it, to see an old man, after so many years of service and of honor, so assailed?"

"Cheer up," bade J. J. J. "The old lion is not going to die this year, and there's an old grizzly in the background the dogs must reckon with before they finish."

In her delight Mrs. Corlis hugged his huge head.

"Uncle Johnny, you are—what do they call it? —you're a trump!"

"Your Uncle Johnny, Vicky, always gets into every game, as I've assured you lots of times." A flash of pride lit up his melancholy face. "You will be satisfied with Uncle Johnny before you get through."

Had any one suggested to J. J. J. that his use of "corporate influence" to dictate nominations or to qualify elections, was unpatriotic and injurious to the country, the magnate would have characterized him as a fool. J. J. J. loved his country. Just as he possessed the old-fashioned American reverence for women, he had preserved the old-fashioned devotion to the Republic and the old-fashioned esteem for her statesmen. Administrations in Washington, of either party, understood perfectly that in a crisis of the country the millions of John J. Jarrett, to the last of them, might be

relied upon to buttress the country's credit or assist the country's cause.

Senator Simeon E. Dawes, to the mind of J. J. J., was a distinguished statesman, a great man, a great servant of the United States. In comparison, he himself was but a money-getter, a serviceable fellow, and could he have been of monetary service to his brother-in-law, he would have felt much the same elation as if he had shared the privilege of paying Daniel Webster's debts.

He was aware that Senator Dawes had more than once been pressed for money. He knew that the Senator, with the financial opportunities of a lifetime in the public service, had remained poor. The Senator, in his integrity, had even leaned backwards; he had rejected, not aid, but opportunities, which J. J. J. had offered him.

When J. J. J. read criticisms of some of " Uncle Simeon's " political methods, he remembered how positively ignorant the latter was of even the rudiments of business. And the image of the aging statesman, alone in his country house down at Primrose Hill, learned, sage, patriotic, incorruptible, poor in a time when the best of men did not disdain to turn " an honest dollar," struck J. J. J.'s imagination. While America was advised by such old Romans, argued J. J. J., the country remained safe.

The chief pride J. J. J. cherished lay in the

marriage of his only sister to Senator Dawes. The child of that union he had doted on from birth, and as she grew his fondness and his worship had also grown. That she was the daughter of a great statesman and had inherited her father's mind filled him with contentment, and that she was yet his own niece allowed him a fearful sense of ownership in what he felt was beyond his deserts. For J. J. J. was modest in a sense; he did not share in the delusion of the day that because a man piled up millions he must therefore possess an intellect. He might himself have gone to the Senate, he could have bought the honor several times; but he did not fancy himself a natural born legislator and he thought too many millionaires were members of "the club" already. He was resolved, however, to keep Senator Dawes in the Senate; if the people did not know enough to return him, J. J. J. would assist their perceptions all he could.

IX

MR. CORLIS AND HIS SUPERIOR

MRS. CORLIS, devoted as she was to the furtherance of the ambitions of her husband, was nevertheless enabled to enjoy the evidence of his discomfiture, apparent but to her, whenever the presence of J. J. J. imposed subordination.

Mr. Corlis was extremely deferential to the railroad king; but it chafed him secretly that his deference was exacted. Mr. Jarrett's manner never varied; it was that of a blood relation to a fascinating younger man, whose character, according to an old man's standards, was not fully formed. Sometimes, unexpectedly, the magnate would regard Corlis through half shut lids and maybe at the conclusion of his scrutiny would compress his lips. Upon the whole, however, his treatment of his niece's husband denoted the toleration of suspended judgment plus an inclination to accept him at face value. Yet J. J. J. was not at all backward in making the fact clear that what he had done for Corlis was for " Vicky's sake," and in no measure due to the merits of the man himself, however considerable they might be.

At dinner that night Mr. Corlis was disposed to be pleased with himself.

" McBride and I," he announced, " have swept the primaries. We've got two-thirds of the wards. The reformers are nowhere, and we will go into the Convention with a solid body of four hundred delegates to deliver as we please. It is the first time exhaustive New York methods have been applied in Chicago; it illustrates the difference between scientific procedure and amateurish guess-work. You have seen the same thing in railroading, Mr. Jarrett. Of course, the newspapers will all be full of McBride and what a Croker to Chicago he has become; but the few who understand know who told him how, who taught him the game, whose directions he obeyed."

Mr. Corlis was justified in his elation; he had much reason for self-congratulation. Moreover, he loved these outbursts of vanity, these songs of triumph in the bosom of his family, which he was too astute to indulge in elsewhere. And he was so much elated that he could not momentarily regard J. J. J. as a restraining presence.

The latter asked some questions concerning the success at the primaries; but Mrs. Corlis fancied he was scarcely pleased with her husband's pæan, and accordingly she shifted their interest.

" Walter," she announced, " I have told Uncle Johnny of your scheme, yours and Mr. McBride's,

and I've half persuaded, half coaxed him into believing it may be a great idea. Have I not, Uncle Johnny? All he now requires, Walter, is the facts and figures from you and he will become enthusiastic, I prophesy."

"Is it true?" Mr. Corlis bowed as only he could bow. "We shall be delighted if we can enlist your interest, Mr. Jarrett. For myself, I'll swear it is the most lucrative enterprise in Christendom, and I hope you will agree with me, as Victoria does."

"I'll listen," agreed J. J. J. "I promised Vicky. What is it you want?" It was the blunt question with which the magnate met every one, for every one he met was a solicitor of some kind.

Mr. Corlis answered in a word,

"We want you to finance the campaign, Mr. Jarrett, and McBride and I will handle the politics of it here in Chicago and in Springfield."

J. J. J. smiled. He liked a pithy answer.

"Well, I'll look into it, I'll look into it," he promised. "Vicky seems to want me to very much, and as you've learned, Corlis, what your wife wants goes very far with me."

"The merits will commend it for itself," responded Mr. Corlis, drily, allowing it to be seen that he was a bit put out.

"Not with me, unless Vicky first approves," said Mr. Jarrett, pointedly. But he continued in

a fatherly tone, perhaps to show that he meant no offense to Corlis,

"If you want me to look at it, my boy, you'll have to let me see the papers right after dinner. I must go to New York to-night, from the telegrams I have received. That market must be bolstered up and taken advantage of. And it makes me sick to think of the want and ruin that will stare hundreds of poor people in the face if a panic comes just now. Poor fools, they never seem to learn."

He fell abruptly into a brown study as was his habit, and they, who knew him well, respected his mood.

"By God," he cried suppressedly, at last, "if I were the government, I'd hang every stock-broker, but I'd stop that game."

Again he mused. The strange head drooped and the dark eyes stared without power of sight, as if a trance had come upon him. Mr. and Mrs. Corlis talked together, pretending not to notice him.

When presently he lifted up his head again, his niece asked with concern if he were not coming back to her for a longer visit.

"Yes, child," he answered. "I think I'll come right back to you. I want to see that Convention. It will divert me. Expect me some time along about Saturday or the following Monday."

"Ah, that will be delightful," declared Mrs. Corlis. "The Pater comes Saturday himself. You can see him, Uncle Johnny, and he can see you, and I—I will have you both together. Nothing could please me so well."

"Good," responded J. J. J. "I'll make a point of it, Vicky, to be back by Sunday anyhow. There'll either be a howl in Wall Street or there won't by Friday, and I can't help them after that. —That reminds me too, Corlis, you mean to help the Senator in his fight, don't you? I mean you and this fellow McBride."

"He is to be endorsed for reëlection to the Senate in the Convention; that is part of the plan," replied Mr. Corlis.

"If we can only get him to agree to be friends with the Boss," Mrs. Corlis added in explanation, thereby innocently stating what her husband wished to leave unsaid.

J. J. J. looked for enlightenment to Corlis, who hastened to reveal just enough to satisfy his interlocutor.

"McBride is willing and the Senator must be, Mr. Jarrett. Egypt, with Governor Ransom, his former standby, has turned against him. The Senator will thoroughly appreciate the exigency, I am sure, and we shall have no trouble in bringing him to an understanding with McBride."

The magnate's manner was as mild as milk.

" Certainly we must leave no stone unturned to reëlect the Senator. You understand that, Corlis. It is a family matter and I leave it to you. And, now we've finished dinner, if you will drive down with me to the station, you can explain your project to me. We'll have as much as half an hour in my car before the train starts, and if I like your scheme, I'll tell you whether I'll go into it and whether I'll let Vicky put her money in."

Mr. Corlis cordially expressed his sense of obligation. He looked cheerful, but at heart he was seething with rebellion, in the first place, because the favor was forthcoming through his wife's intercession, and in the second, because J. J. J.'s expressed wish about the reëlection was in reality an order. He kept his head, however, for he realized the value of the chance offered him.

Mr. Corlis was not above profiting by his wife's intermediation—indeed, as we have seen, he frequently prompted her action in his behalf—but the fact that he was dependent upon it awakened his resentment. However, he congratulated himself that if his present project succeeded, it would emancipate him, in a large degree, from the millions of his wife and the favor of J. J. J.

In a measure his political ambitions likewise proceeded from his relationship to the family into which he had married. Some day he hoped to be relieved from the shadow of the fame of Sen-

ator Dawes. One thing comforted him: J. J. J. and his father-in-law were both old men; he was forty-five. They must decline; he had not yet touched his zenith.

The carriage was announced. Mr. Corlis stepped outside to speak to the coachman, while J. J. J., wrapped in the cloak he preferred to an overcoat, bade his niece good-by. She noticed his depression

"I'm sorry to have you go off alone, Uncle Johnny. If it were not for these politics I would go with you. You ought to stay a day and let me cheer you up." She stooped to kiss the old man on the mouth.

He held both her hands tightly clasped within his own.

"I hate to go, Vicky, and I hate to do what I know I shall have to when I get to New York. To have power is to have a night hag on one's back. And are we ever permitted to choose between the good and the bad in this world? It's nothing but a choice between evils that we get."

She watched him down the steps, the light from the hall thrown out into the night over him. He turned at the bottom and gazed back at her longingly, she thought. How grotesque, how picturesque he was! Almost misshapen, but with what points of dazzling beauty—those unfathomable eyes, that woman's tender smile!

The Mills of Man

He left Tuesday night. Thursday morning he was in Wall Street. The crash of stocks resounded from London to San Francisco. The thousand and one small speculators were "cleaned out;" the plan of the masters of finance was ruthlessly executed. J. J. J. effected the combination he desired. He blasted his way through. If war has its necessities, so also has finance.

X

THE REPORTER FROM *THE PUNDIT.*

MRS. CORLIS strode back and forth, through the empty rooms, after Uncle Johnny and her husband had gone. The old man's depression and its cause, as revealed by the few words he had let fall, served to stir again in her mind the old impossible question which had pursued her, at intervals, all through her life—"Why have I more than I know what to do with, while the woman around the corner must pawn her soul to get bread to stop her hunger?"

She knew how vain the question was. She had assured herself a thousand times that all her riches, however used, could not avail to alter by a particle the eternal division between those who have and those who have not. The Biblical solution she knew was no solution, and, if attempted, must aggravate the trouble. At times she was even half persuaded the trouble did not exist, except in the fancy of over-conscientious people.

Mr. Corlis had feudal ideas upon the matter. He believed in great power for the few and in the duty of the few to look after their dependents. His wife observed that in practice, however, he

was keen, excessively so, about the power, but inclined to laxity in regard to the obligation.

He supported his theory of the few versus the many by a dogma concerning blood and family. She had heard it many times. She knew he was vastly proud of the Virginian blood of his mother, and he affected to believe that the virtue of blood endured for generations and that history showed that the natural rulers of society were the few of the patrician strain. Yet observation had taught her that, whatever her husband's abstract respect for blood might be, in conduct he flattered the possessors of money and eschewed the acquaintance of impecunious patricians, even such as possessed race-horse pedigrees.

However, he was convinced of his own right divine, and perhaps that exhausted the real function of his dogma. His great ambition, to which financial and political success were incidental, was to found a family. His wife acquiesced in practice, but she reserved her mind. His instigation was responsible for her complete devotion to fashionable society, and she lent all her resources to aid him in realizing his aim.

But sometimes it struck her how un-American the aspiration to found a family was; sometimes it seemed to her that the generalization concerning the virtue of aristocratic blood and of patrician family was but a phase of the infinite glorification

of self-love. She had great social knowledge, possibly as much as any woman in America, and truthful to herself as she was, with that strong, exact mind of hers, she could not but be aware what preposterous fiction the legend of American families was. At the utmost, descent in America was "lineaged respectability."

She was passing through the hall in her restless journeying, when she heard the footman refusing a reporter admittance to the house.

"Mr. Jarrett has left for New York and the family cannot be disturbed."

"When did Mr. Jarrett leave?" she heard the reporter question.

"He's left; that's all you'll learn from me, young man," the footman replied.

Mrs. Corlis frequently did impulsive things, things sometimes that took the breath of her world away. She did one of the least of them now.

She stepped forward. "Simpkins," she ordered, "tell the caller Mrs. Corlis will see him." Then she walked down the great hall.

One glance assured her that she had rightly recognized the voice. She extended her hand, smiling with that kindly graciousness that was all her own.

"It is Christopher Ruggles, is it not? I know you by your eyes, and I have not seen you for at least sixteen years. Come, sit down by me, for

I want to learn all about you, Christopher, and what you are doing here in Chicago. Of course you remember what excellent friends we used to be in Primrose Hill."

But Ruggles had been sent out by *The Pundit* to find J. J. J. and to interview the latter on the financial situation. Consequently, he had no time to spare, even for a new-found old friend. But while she appreciated his exigency, Mrs. Corlis would not let him go until he had promised to appear at luncheon the next day at two o'clock. Then she told him where to look for her uncle and he hurried off to reach the station before Mr. Jarrett's train pulled out.

She inquired of Mr. Corlis, when he returned, if *The Pundit* reporter had succeeded in catching Uncle Johnny. No, Mr. Corlis replied, he had himself met the reporter coming in the station as he was leaving it.

She told her husband that she had discovered an old Primrose Hill friend in the newspaper man, and that she had invited him to luncheon next day in order to talk over old times with him.

Corlis looked supercilious.

"I am invariably courteous to newspaper men from policy and I will caution Simpkins for his impertinence," he remarked. "But as for asking a reporter to luncheon—they usually are a pushful lot. You say, too, you have known nothing about

this fellow since you left Primrose Hill, that you haven't seen or heard of him for sixteen years?"

"Oh, as for that, Chris Ruggles was too intrinsically good and simple to have turned out badly," she rejoined. "He is the kind to have made mistakes, but not to have gone wrong. The Pater used to be interested in him and I remember that he always had a mind. I am quite curious to know what he has been through and what he thinks."

"Well, I can tell you one thing, Victoria, if you want to know. McBride has a clever woman who does his investment business and that sort of thing. The Boss and I meet, noons, in her office in "The Obelisk," and that's why I know of her. I have seen this fellow of yours in there.—Oh, I don't mean that there is anything irregular. She is too vixenish, I should judge, and knows too well how to take care of herself."

"Well, that kind are sometimes the most devoted. What is her name?"

"Brown—Hildegarde Brown. She looks as if she might be devoted, if she set about it."

"I hope so. He has a desolate look in his eyes and a capable woman is exactly what he needs."

"She's all that, I fancy, Victoria." Mr. Corlis laughed. "But don't be too quick in your enthusiasm, Mrs. Corlis," he added. "A reporter

as a fad, you know, might be more inconveniently distasteful than a literary upstart, or a sentimental-voiced young clergyman."

The luncheon next day left Mrs. Corlis in a quandary. It pointed the question: Were men to be divided into two classes, patricians and plebeians, according to the rank of their ancestors, or the evidence of their own success and failure, the amount of money they possessed, or the degree of poverty they endured?

The personality of Ruggles itself provoked speculation in her mind. Undoubtedly he was the same old Chris she had once liked so well, when she was a young lady of twenty-three and he a rustic boy of eighteen. The brown beard did not disguise him, nor the stoop in the shoulders alter him. The same familiar simplicity of truth was in his face and the deep blue eyes expressed the same old wistful wonder. They were sadder now than then and the deep lines about the mouth told of spiritual despairs. Otherwise he was the old Chris, awkward as ever he had been, a refined mind and spirit habited within an ungraceful, almost an uncouth, body. Was such mismating of patrician quality and plebeian stuff characteristic of democracy and modern life? Mrs. Corlis wondered.

Then there were the ideas she had drawn from the reporter.

She had said to him,

"I beg you to tell me what you are doing, how you have succeeded and for what you are hoping, Christopher." The maternal interest in her face had been beautiful. "Just as in the old days; precisely as you used to do. I have cherished very great expectations for you with your intellect and all the knowledge I was sure you would accumulate. Some day, I have been telling myself, I will hear of Christopher; some day he will make a name for himself."

"But I really have done nothing in the world, as you would count it, Mrs. Corlis," he had answered, perhaps a bit regretfully, but not at all shamefacedly. She had even suspected that some shade of humble superiority colored the tone of his reply.

"Tell me, at least, why it is you're working on a newspaper?" she had asked. "Mine is the privilege of an old intimacy, Christopher."

"Simply to make a living," he had said.

"Become tiresomely practical like all the rest of us in this work-a-day age, you mean?—Oh, Chris, I didn't believe that would be the end of all your dreams." Actual disappointment was in her voice.

"Nevertheless it is," he had answered, lifting to her his candid eyes. "And, Mrs. Corlis," he spoke earnestly, "from what I have learned of

life, to be a good ordinary man is to be quite a success, and to make an honest living a very noble achievement."

"No doubt." Her acquiescence had been a little cold. "What you say is literally true—for an ordinary man. But you never were an ordinary man, Christopher. Are you so much of a Socialist that you must drag yourself down as well as seek to level everybody else?"

She had smiled as if daring him to accept the classification.

"Oh, I am nothing, I can assure you, Mrs. Corlis," he had answered with a shrug. "Only," he had added gravely, "I think I may say I have grown more real."

She had rallied him, a trifle vexed perhaps that he had refused to pose.

"Oh, then, you are a realist, not a Socialist." She had seen by his flush that her jest to him was earnest. Sympathetically she had bidden, "Come, tell me what is this new gospel, Christopher, if, indeed, it be a gospel."

His slow face had gradually lighted up, while in the dreaming eyes faint sparkles of defiance had appeared.

"I will, if you wish it, although I warn you, you will not like it, when I am done."

"Tell me anyhow, Christopher. I am always interested in whatever you may think."

"It is not very much. Just this: We Americans are practical people and already we have rid ourselves of most illusions and preposterous fictions. We like to get down to hard pan, as we say; we dislike to get fooled. I'm down to hard pan, or near it. I'm convinced that the only nobility lies in work; in helping to bear the brunt; in taking one's share of the hardest. The man who does not is a skulker, a coward, and a lazybones. To be a knight, 'a man of honors,' chivalrous within the limits of a class, and a parasite upon toil, isn't to be valiant. The soldier's place is in the breach, and the deadliest struggle is not on the battleship or in the regiment, but in the factory and on the farm. To be superior to the common duty of mankind is to be affected, vulgar, contemptible, mean."

"Then you believe that aristocracy, so-called, is a sham?" had been her immediate question. "But what of its function to form manners, cherish refinement, develop art?"

His lip had curled.

"They play very little part in the whole life of mankind."

"Exactly," she had argued, "and they would play none at all, but for aristocracy. That is the justification for aristocracy, its excuse for being. For you cannot deny that those things are valuable?"

The man had forgotten the great house he sat in and all conventional respect. His face had grown almost distorted with the force of his contempt.

"What cant!" he had cried. "The function of aristocracy, forsooth! Genius has starved in aristocratic streets and fools have flouted wisdom in aristocratic drawing-rooms, how often or how seldom, answer that! Aristocratic monopoly of anything, of a true refinement even! Why, the distinguishing quality of aristocracy, its superiority, indeed, lies in its ability to pick out the main chance and its ruthlessness in sacrificing all else to securing its practical prosperity. It knows best how to perpetuate its privilege in the easiest manner. Marriage is its method. Nowadays, for instance, it's keen after American heiresses."

"Oh, Christopher, Christopher," Mrs. Corlis had cried, somewhat disturbed, but not at all displeased, "you are perfectly incorrigible."

XI

THE SCHEME

RUGGLES was telling Gard how he had tried to interview J. J. J. and had instead seen Mrs. Corlis, who had invited him to luncheon.

"Of course you went," said Gard.

"Yes. I have just come from there."

"Why, Chris, you never mentioned it to me before, about your knowing Mrs. Corlis so well, years ago."

"I didn't think to, Gard. Besides, I didn't suppose she'd remember it."

"Just like you," said Gard, drily.

The two, leaving the office, went out to dinner together. They sought a little German restaurant, where the beer was good and the music passable.

"It is strange," mused Ruggles, aloud, as they sipped their little cups of coffee after dinner, "it is strange how the very system one knows is rotten through and through fosters the amenities of life. I know leisure is vicious and cowardly, and that rich women are parasites, but—"

"But what, dreamer?" asked Gard sharply.

"Oh, nothing, except that it does one good to come in contact with a cultivated woman like Mrs. Corlis. There is an atmosphere about her that all the laborious virtue and humble heroism never can create; an air of refinement, distinction, what shall I call it? But it tones one up; it satisfies and soothes at the same time that it stimulates. It has an effect like beauty or like music. And, after the brutality of these streets and of the ill-bred people one pushes against every day—well, it's heavenly, that's what it is."

Gard received this confession with a bitter smile. Not all her endeavors, devotions, sacrifices, she knew in her soul, could vie with the sweetness of that woman's ladyhood.

"There's exactly where you Socialists all tumble down," she cried, unconsciously upbraiding him. "In your hearts what you worship is the lady of aristocracy, and you kick because you have to put up with a daughter of the people.—Come, let's get out of here; I'm sick of sitting still and seeing people eat."

They quarreled in the street on their way back to "The Obelisk," where Gard said she had some extra work to do. That is, she quarreled and Chris acquiesced.

"What have I done, Gard?" he entreated, in his naïve ignorance.

"Done? Nothing, you booby," she retorted.

"You are not angry—because—I enjoyed Mrs. Corlis?" he asked, realizing the fact in his slow way.

"No," said Gard, turning her shoulder toward him.

"Come, tell me what is the matter, Gard," he said, making a final appeal as they came to the entrance of "The Obelisk."

"Can't you see?" snapped Gard. "I'm jealous, that's what I am."

She declared it fiercely and then laughed. The storm-door shut in Ruggles' face.

He stood alone on the sidewalk, his mouth wide open in astonishment.

Gard, in her office, worked at a typewriter that whole evening. She had started life as a stenographer, and it was at McBride's request that she was striking off the copies herself instead of intrusting them to one of the girls she employed. The Boss had called Gard to the door of the private office that very noon and had given her the papers, saying he wouldn't trust them in any other hands but her own.

An hour later McBride summoned her. She found Mr. Corlis just leaving by the private door. The Boss sat in one of the chairs at the directors' table, his paunch thrown out, a broad smile illuminating his great countenance.

"Well, what do you think of it, Gard? I guess you know enough to think." He looked up.

"Big thing," she answered. "Of course you two highwaymen mean to go through every pocket the blessed public has this time."

McBride roared.

"You hit out straight from the shoulder, you do, Gard. A feller knows where to find you on the spot; you don't have to be fixed beforehand, you don't. Now Corlis, in here, was leary about trustin' you with them papers, but I up and told him you knew all my affairs from the inside. That shut him up, and he said he used to know you ten years ago when you was in his office."

The Boss looked at her interrogatingly.

"Yes," said Gard, flushing a little, "the first position I ever got was in the Traction offices. I was just eighteen when I started in."

"So that's where you picked up your feelin' about Corlis. I can get a rise out of you every time by just mentionin' his name."

"He is a ruffian and a snob at heart," flashed Gard, "for all his elegance and his condescension. I tell you, Mike McBride, you'll be sorry yet for the day you went into this deal with him."

The Boss looked surprised; then he shook his head, got up, put on his overcoat, and walked to the private door. With his hand on the knob, he said,

"But his wife—she's different, Gard."

"I'm tired of hearing about the peerless Mrs. Corlis," replied Gard.

Alone in the office now, high up in "The Obelisk," she rattled the typewriter. The details of the whole scheme had been put into her possession. What, for one thing, she copied, were the figures representing the values of the plants and the earnings of every traction company, whether surface or elevated, of every electric power, and gas and electric light company, and of every steam or electric heating company within the limits of Chicago. She copied estimates, also, of what the earnings severally and in total could be made, were all these plants grouped under one management with the economies of centralized administration rendered possible. Some computation, furthermore, was attempted concerning the possible earnings of new electric plants, new traction lines and the like, while recommendations appeared for extensions and improvements in the existing systems and establishments.

In a word, the scheme proposed an absorption of all franchises and privileges that had been granted or should be granted to supply the needs of the people of Chicago in the way of transportation, lighting, heating and power. It was a franchise trust, a monopoly upon all the grants of the

municipality, present and future. The bulked profits could be made enormous.

Gard's trained business mind grasped the full nature of the undertaking. She understood the steps that must be taken in order to render the project a success. She realized how much capital would be required to finance the matter; how not only the permission of the city government must be obtained, but probably enabling legislation at Springfield must be secured. She recollected that McBride had mentioned J. J. Jarrett's name in connection with the scheme, so the money was already found. McBride himself owned the Mayor, and the Boss and Corlis between them could influence the Common Council; thus the municipality could be relied upon. Springfield remained. A legislature might always be bought, perhaps; but generally a governor to be owned must be elected. The convention of the majority party in Illinois met next week to nominate a governor. That the new political combination would attempt to control that convention, Gard foresaw.

She recognized the mind of Walter H. D. Corlis in all this. As she leaned above the typewriter, having finished the last page of copy, she penetrated, she felt, to the depths of his policy, and, much as in her soul she scorned the man, Gard's mind admired him—his sweep of vision, his grasp of men and things, his sheer audacity, headlong

ambition, forehanded provision, implacable purpose. After all, to do him justice, the man if not great was large in his way, that Gard admitted.

Corlis had come to Chicago from the East ten years ago, sent out by J. J. Jarrett to manage his interests in Chicago traction and lighting companies. Within a year he had been recognized as the practical manager of those corporations. In five years' time he had changed the whole complexion of the street railway problem in Chicago. He practiced conciliation on every side; he granted favors to the politicians of both parties; he agreed with the pure aspirations of the reformers who were gentlemen and rendered himself personally popular with the reformers who were cranks. He flattered editors and did services for the reporters. He consulted public opinion and made proclamation of his ambition to give the city the best possible service for the lowest fare.

Yet the man who had thus captured the imagination and the goodwill of the fiercest democracy in the country, was physically and temperamentally an aristocrat and proud of the quality. He had the manners of the East, the reserve and dignity, except when he unbent to what privately he called the mob. He possessed as much as any man that physical distinction which rendered him a favorite of women and which excited the enmity of men.

He escaped criticism from every side. The public liked his patronage; the business men, his ability; the politicians found it to their interests to "stand in" with him; reformers felt he was too much the gentleman for them to suspect him. Society adored him, younger men imitated him, and even staid citizens approved of him. In what, indeed, was he vulnerable? Who dare decry him? what sneer deride him? what calumny harm? He was proof at every point. The Jarrett millions supported him; the prestige of his wife enhanced his own; the reputation of Senator Dawes found in him its heir.

Besides, Corlis had been building up political power of his own. Through her intimacy with Mrs. McBride, Gard had an inkling of the unavowed relations between Mr. Corlis and the Machine. In fact, she judged that a secret hard and fast alliance existed, and she suspected about what the conditions had been for years.

One of McBride's men could always get a job on the Corlis railways. Such aid had proved of decisive value to McBride in maintaining his machine. When the accidents of war deprived the Boss of patronage for a season, he could fall back upon Corlis to furnish jobs with which to keep his men in line.

McBride had risen steadily in power during the last ten years, even as Corlis had waxed in repute

and power. Few knew enough to associate their successes. Respectability had scouted the intimation as base slander. McBride had gained indisputable control of his party within the last five years; lieutenants of his had gradually become masters in their wards. Three years ago McBride, for the first time, succeeded in completely capturing "The City Hall." Timothy Murphy, the present Mayor, was McBride's man.

The Republican Machine which McBride had built up, surpassed everything Chicago had ever known. He had had the secret benefit of Corlis' advice at every step, and his model had avowedly been New York's Tammany Hall. Once entrenched in office, the organization had now so securely wound its tentacles around the roots of power, that nothing short of a revolution at the ballot-box could shake it from control.

Gard reviewed these things in her mind. She closed the typewriter, and gathering up what she had copied, locked it in a secure drawer in the safe.

Then she stood stock-still in the middle of the room, thinking. She was twenty-eight. Her clear face, despite its beautiful austerity, was young still. Yet she knew better how this world is made than did many experienced men of fifty. The knowledge saddened her at times, at times made her sick. But she would not have been ignorant. She felt herself the stronger for the knowledge; she

had a perfect horror of being fooled. Besides, after all, she found it interesting, wonderfully interesting, this tragi-comedy. For Gard possessed a magnificent zest for life, which was stronger than her distastes or her disgusts or even her conscience.

XII

GARD SPEAKS OUT

CHRIS RUGGLES found Gard at her desk. The desk was strewn with papers in confusion, though somehow Gard was able to extract from the chaos whatever in particular she wanted.

Upon a mass of papers lay a paper book, open, and over this Gard was laughing to herself, silently, in her mirth bowing her head up and down. Her lips, even as she laughed, were screwed half painfully, as if, though she laughed, the jest of what she read hurt her. Perpetual laugher as she was, she had far rather been reverent.

She wheeled her revolving chair as she heard Chris enter.

"Well," she demanded in a hard voice, with a hard look in her eyes. "Well," she repeated, "what are you doing here? You needn't come here." She studied his sheepishness. "You must be afraid, you've stayed away so long—since Wednesday and this is Saturday."

Then she laughed.

"I suppose you thought you'd be snapped up. But really you're quite safe."

Chris hung his head a little lower and experienced much shame.

She fell to measuring him with a shrewd eye.

"Well," she snapped finally, "it's true; there's no sense in denying it, since you know it too. I was jealous, just like other women—the same as your aristocrat has been of her husband often enough. Yes, a plain case of jealousy; your magnificent friend had you too much hypnotized to suit me. But I'm over it, I guess."

The beautiful candor came back gradually into her face. She laughed.

"I've got the devil down; he's squirming now under my foot, and I'm your friend again, Chris, you needn't worry."

He sat down in his accustomed place, upon the leather lounge against the wall. He wished to evince his appreciation of her frank good-fellowship, but he did not know what to say, unready truth-teller that he was. He continued to look his gratitude, however, and to evade the issue irrelevantly inquired,

"What have you there that makes you laugh?"

"A funny book—Artemus Ward, in fact. It's the only kind I read; the same taste as Abraham Lincoln, I'll have you note. Your finical culture's not shocked, Mr. Bluestocking, I hope. I have to get my fun where I can understand it, you see. You didn't expect to find me mooning over Brown-

ing, did you?" she ended, with a burst of laughter.

"I haven't any fault to find, I'm sure," he answered in all seriousness. "You want to be yourself."

"What else is there for me to do?" she demanded. "I've got to keep sane in this crush, haven't I? I have to laugh, even if there's not much to laugh at and I'd rather not. You either laugh at frauds and fools, or else your soul's embittered by their poison, I've noticed. Why, when I've had an interview with some oily schemer and seen square through his rotten honesty, before I take up bonds and propositions once again, I just pull out old Artemus for a half minute and have a smile. He's my bracer."

"Cæsar compiled a book of jokes," said Chris. The pedantic precedent seemed to satisfy him. "So I guess a Napoleon of finance like you can read a book of them."

She smiled, but between her smiles she studied Ruggles narrowly again. She saw that he strove to be natural and to put himself on the old terms with her once more. His failure exasperated her, and she expressed herself bluntly, as was her way. Gard had a predilection for heroic remedies.

She pulled Chris up with a jerk.

"I want to know why you've not been in here for three days, or rather I want to tell you I know

why, and I'll tell you why—speak right out in meeting."

"I have been so fearfully busy," he said, making a lame excuse. "Politics, the last few weeks, have kept me fairly jumping on the paper."

She disposed of that plea.

"Stuff! Go tell that to some one who'll believe it. You didn't want to come, and you didn't want to because you were afraid."

He tried humorous diversion.

"Oh, now, you are pretty fierce, but you're not so awfully formidable as that."

"It's not my fierceness you're afraid of, but my softness," she pressed relentlessly.

He flushed and strove confusedly to protest.

"Bother,—hear me!" she cried. "You know it and I do too. I confess it, don't I; I'm not ashamed of it. But see here, Chris Ruggles, it needn't make any difference between us at all. You can stay my friend, can't you, and whatever else there is, is, in fact, none of your business. Just disregard it, please."

Ruggles, man-like, felt submerged. Compassion, involuntary admiration of her courage, a sense of littleness in himself, all stirred in him. Bunglingly he attempted to express what he experienced.

"But you, such a noble woman as you are,

Gard, you wouldn't think of throwing yourself away on such a misfit as I am."

"Stop disparaging yourself, Chris, or I shall resent it," she cried, flaming up. "Besides," she fluttered for an instant, "I haven't said a word about marrying you, have I? So shut up, will you! Or ask me, if you want to, and see how quickly I'll refuse."

"Oh," murmured Ruggles, overcome with confusion, "I beg your pardon sincerely, Gard." He bent his burning face.

"Pshaw, Chris, that's all right. All I've wanted to say, I've said, and I feel better, too. Now, I want you to come in here every day the same as you have been doing the last two years. I miss you, if you don't. And besides, I'm just the sort of friend you need; you can't get along without me, you know. What you require is a manager, Chris, or a mother, and I aspire to be a little of them both, I guess." And Gard laughed silently, shaking in her chair. The truth, as she saw it, was most always humorous, despite all that she could do.

Then she sat looking at him.

His head was down between his hands. He knew that what she said was the truth. He was dumbly grateful for her friendship, its unselfishness, its reliability; it was a bank which would cash all his drafts unhesitatingly. In fact, she

gave all and asked nothing. And realizing her disinterestedness, he felt ashamed of his honorable scruples and the prudence which had kept him away since her jealous flash over Mrs. Corlis had revealed what he had been too stupid or too humble to divine before.

She seemed to read his mind.

"Yes, believe me, you will not hurt me by coming as often as ever. I don't want you to stay away; you are such a comfort, such a joy. Now take Artemus here and read awhile. I've just got to finish up something I must do."

She wheeled the chair to face the desk. Her long fingers searched skillfully in the muddle of papers and drew forth those which she desired. She shifted them, then became absorbed in what they contained. The softness vanished from her countenance, the aquilinities all standing out keen as blades.

Chris held the book and looked at her across its top. If he had not had proof of her magnanimity and been the actual beneficiary of it, he would have believed the outline of her profile, so firm, so clear, indicative of cold will and piercing mind alone.

He sat and marveled as she worked. She had the energy of a steam engine and yet the machinery glided as if its joints were silk. Her brain stabbed through to the core of business proposi-

tions like a knife to the heart of its victim. He had seen her deal with dubious men and handle difficult affairs. She was never cheated, never angered, never for an instant at a loss. And, although she understood men through and through, perceived their wiles and lies and schemes, never was induced to ascribe better motives to them than those which really animated them, yet she was able to judge them all in the light of a wide and good-humored tolerance, getting along equally well with a greedy Jew, an unscrupulous Yankee, a coarse vulgarian, or a pompous respectability, and selecting the good point of each.

She handled many sorts of propositions, bought and sold, promoted, organized. It might be a new patent, a gold, copper, zinc or silver mine, timberland, real estate, industrials, railway bonds. She passed from one subject to another with facility, and grasped each problem with the same keen power of perception.

Chris considered these things that defined the differences between them. He remembered how he had met her three years ago and how she had risen since then. She had told him that she had made $11,244 last year and that this year she was sure of clearing $20,000 at least. McBride, because she was the friend of his young wife, had helped "turn things her way" in the first place. Her

own ability, industry, and integrity had done the rest.

Ruggles admired her, if for nothing more, for her power to cope with the world. Even what some might call her faults he ascribed to her virtues. Her candor was a part of her great courage; it was not lack of modesty or of womanly feeling, he knew. She feared nothing in the universe, and her humor, with her courage, discounted the effects of the frowns and penalties of the world. She was equal to any man and his superior, commonly, on his own ground.

This fine independence, this ability to take care of herself, this aptness for fence and attack, instead of divesting her of charm in Ruggles' eyes, magnified her in his mind. Her prototype he must go far back to find; he found her in the free Spartan women, or, ideally, in the goddess Artemis. So America, in her vast freedom, reverts to Hellas here and there.

XIII

A SERIOUS YOUTH

CHRISTOPHER RUGGLES was the son of a man who for twenty years had been the village blacksmith in Senator Dawes' town. The father was a sturdy, honest, right-minded man, who read between the hours of work at his forge and who conceived intellectual ambitions for his son. It was the story so common to democracy.

The boy obtained an education, helped partly by his father, partly supported by his own efforts and the influence of Senator Dawes. He had a studious disposition and a pondering mind. He stood well up near the head of his classes all through college; he won a fellowship upon graduation and continued his studies two years longer.

Moral integrity may be rare; intellectual integrity is more rare. Ruggles by the constitution of his mind was perforce a seeker of truth, a speaker of truth, and one who thought truthfully. This quality was developed and sustained by his rigorous training in science and philosophy, for both of which he had much aptitude. What he lacked in his mental make-up was humor, which is the bal-

ance wheel of the judgment, and a sense for human nature, a thing separable from logic.

Perhaps he should have become a professor in a college, or have secured a place in which he could have pursued pure science for its own sake. Owing to the debts he had incurred in paying for his education, young Ruggles could not afford to accept the instructorship in his own college which was offered him. Instead he took the principalship of a public school in a small Ohio city. The salary enabled him to pay his debts the first year and to live besides.

He did not succeed as principal. He was patient, kind, thorough in his instruction, just in his administration and to the teachers under him. But such virtues were not enough. He did not understand that to perform one's duty is by no means all the game; he had not learned that to treat men with justice and consideration in no wise contents them. He had absolutely no notion of the art of small flattery, of deft deference, of the manipulation of men through their vanities. He was natively so simple that he supposed he could best fulfill his function by telling the truth and trusting each man as a man.

Naturally he failed to please either the teachers or the members of the Board of Education. He ignored the politics of his place; he reported a teacher as a good or a bad teacher, never consider-

ing how much of a " pull " the said teacher might have. Even his gravity and dutifulness offended; he could not always prove obliging, while he never could be charged with being " a good fellow." It soon came to be understood among the members of the Board that the principal might be " all right," but that he was " unpractical." That verdict pronounced upon a man is, in three-fourths of America, as good as a death sentence.

He lost his position at the end of the year. In the emergency he attempted to obtain private pupils. There were some men in the town who appreciated the young man's thorough scholarship and they helped him. By the commencement of the new school year, he had secured a number of private pupils and the promise of others. There was a demand for a teacher to fit boys for college; if he could succeed with them, a living would be assured.

He was not an inferior teacher, though perhaps he knew too much. He succeeded moderately the first year. The second he did not obtain quite so many pupils. By the third he had hardly any, and at the close of that year it was evident to himself and to all that he had failed. It was his want of practicality.

In the first place he ignored his enemies or rather his detractors. He had no idea that they were busy at his reputation, he was so intently fixed

upon his own business. Then, if he got along tolerably well with the boys, he failed to please their parents. He felt that he entered a house to teach, not to make a study of the prejudices and temperament of the family.

That first and last of the social graces, flattery, he did not understand in any of its phases from gross to delicate. In truth, he did not perceive that it was tacitly demanded of him to render constant homage to every exalted shopkeeper and manufacturer of the town. He did not render tribute to human self-love, precisely for the reason that he entertained too much respect for human nature to suppose it desired obsequiousness and falsehood. In fine, to Ruggles the whole constitution of " Respectability " was a sealed volume; he fatuously assumed that men wanted truth and that truth was the cement of society.

There came a time when he had no money in that town, when the soles of his shoes were worn through and his clothes were " seedy." He made heroic efforts to find pupils; he even haunted people's doors. But the fiat of Respectability had gone out against him; he was said to hold too loose views upon religion to render him a safe instructor for growing boys. Besides, it was understood that at heart he was a Socialist or something, and that he did not show his superiors, men of recognized position, the respect due from so

young a man. Blunt men characterized him as a "fool."

Even before the general condemnation had gone forth, Ruggles had suffered. He was the victim, as all men are, of his temperament and inheritance, of his education and its limitations. First a blacksmith, then a scholar, his four years in Ohio had shown him the attractiveness of the merely physical and social life. He perceived this through a window, as it were: he saw it in the gaiety of a small city whose gaiety cannot but be visible to all; he discovered it in the houses of the rich men whose sons he tutored.

Yet he was irretrievably shut out from that delight. There were clerks who had risen in that town even to the height of marrying heiresses. Manners were not requisite, if one had audacity and jollity instead. Family was much talked about, yet want of it could be forgiven some men. Fellows he had seen who by dint of dressing well and by a modicum of *savoir faire* had scaled the social rampart, become members of society and favorites of women. But he possessed education, intellect, natural delicacy. Why did these qualities avail him not at all?

With characteristic candor he formulated the reason to himself; his feet were too big, his body too awkward, his speech too serious and too slow. He would have parted cheerfully with

a block of his mental attainments, if that would have sufficed to render him a graceful dancer. He was even on the verge of despising mind and admiring flippancy; he confided to a friend that he wished he might possess some lightness of temperament instead of so much blacksmith virtue and scientific precision.

There came a night when a loaded pistol lay upon his table and he meant to use it before dawn. Without, a golden moon rode in a silvered vault, while the breath of spring puffed the listless curtains at the open windows. Standing looking at the night, the conviction came to Ruggles concerning nature which had come to him concerning human intercourse, that both might be very beautiful were he only fitted to respond to their demands.

He leaned far out of the window. The silent streets were paved like magic thoroughfares, the new-leafed trees rustled with faint joys, and overhead the arch of heaven deepened vast and filmy.

"Ah," he thought, "I am not in all ways out of tune; I can chime with this moonlight's ethereal melody. This also is a part of life, as much as that in which I have no part; and therefore, I may stay." Into his mind there floated those divinest of all words,

"Magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas and fairy lands forlorn."

As the fragrance of a precious wine may do, they heartened him.

Why should he succumb? He would adventure! The world, the various world, lay spread before him. Putty cannot be galvanized; neither can provincial respectability be civilized. But he would not remain to die its victim; he would fare forth.

Before dawn he had set out. He left a note for his landlady, promising to send back the twelve dollars he still owed her, as soon as he had earned them.

He tramped three hundred miles northwestward across the Indiana prairies. It took him the summer through to reach his destination. He worked his way. The contact with farmers, hired hands, with tramps and other men of the same vagrant spirit, interested him; they were primary men; they constituted the front rank of society in the battle against Nature.

He worked with his companions on the farm; he walked with them upon the highway; he got jobs in the gangs along the railway; he heaved sacks, loading wagons. From the lips of all he heard the name Chicago. It seemed the Mecca of all toilers and all outcasts; its magnitude and opportunities enthralled the crude imagination of men who lived by their hands. It promised a pro-

fusion of work and amusement, a multitude of chances, sights, sensations, experiences.

Half consciously, therefore, Ruggles shaped his course by the attraction of that tremendous loadstone.

Thus Chicago beckoned ahead of him, looming monstrous, ugly and almighty. It was the archetypical industrial city, the complete representative of the modern age, as Rome had been of the ancient world and Venice of the Renaissance. There was no past about it, even near, no towers, traditions, temples. It was built upon the naked prairie, built of steel. Possessed of colossal barbarities, its glories were meats and grains and metals. It had invented the bridge style of architecture, the stockyards and the whaleback. It reeked of industrialism; it was a gross compound of money and of muscle. Its achievements, brutalities, energies, candors, democracies, opulences, lusts, like its products, its foods and its steel, were characteristics, unalloyed, of the age of to-day.

This dream or this apprehension of Modernity it was that saved him. Learning and the atmosphere of Philistine prosperity had near made him mad, but now he perceived, vaguely, the magnitude of his times; he became enamored of the manifestations of the pulse of tremendous life. For he was a mind; his story is the history of a

mind, as that of others may be of a passion, or of a conscience, or of a career. He suffered the defect of his idiosyncrasy; while he pondered upon larger questions and sought to find truth diligently, he missed the practical moment and allowed the concrete chance to go by.

Thus came the usual crisis. Upon a Sunday night the following summer in Chicago, Ruggles walked in State street with seven cents in his pocket and no prospect of work for the morrow.

Week days, State street is an exaggerated county fair. Sunday nights, in summer, it is more curious still. The broad roadway is vacant, the huge department stores are tenantless, while the show windows, which like wide, golden stripes streak the lateral walls, present to slowly moving crowds panoramas of all the goods and treasures their covetous souls desire. The motley procession fills the sidewalks and individual collisions constantly occur; for the populace of Chicago walk as country people walk, all over the road.

That night the orators were holding forth at nearly every corner, while groups, forming, disintegrating, re-forming, clustered about each. To some of the listeners the oratory afforded a sort of open-air theatre; the most, however, good-natured and skeptical, were merely "taking in" whatever they encountered and lounged off, after a minute, unpersuaded. Balm was offered for all humors:

at one corner a man from a box expounded "The Single Tax"; at the next a red-hot Socialist denounced the Rothschilds; further on a woman, who was the new incarnation of the Messiah, prophesied; halfway up another block, a fat evangelist with a trumpet voice sang a Methodist hymn from the deck of a gospel wagon, and then unctuously urged the change of heart which meant so much to the middle nineteenth century and means so little to us now.

Ruggles stopped at many points and, for want of else to do, listened to the orators. His half attentive ear caught presently the strain of an old hymn which once had helped console his father for a hard life in the smithy. It drew him to the ring of idlers like himself who formed about the singing lasses of the Salvation Army. Stanza followed stanza; to a dolorous tune the words invited tired men to rest in Jesus.

The rank sentimentalism comforted the hopeless young man somehow; he fancied it must be a trick of heredity. But the verses did solace while they lasted, and he realized what might be the force of their appeal to overburdened men upon the eve of another week of toil. His eyes filled involuntarily, for there was brought home to him with sudden truth the life-predicament of the hard-handed father whom in his soul he honored as a hero; he recognized what was the perennial plight

of the majority of men, what constitutes the old, tedious, sordid, irresponsible tragedy.

"Are you looking to get converted?" a woman's voice asked at his ear.

Startled, he turned and through the mist in his eyes saw a tall young woman of a severe and noble beauty.

"Oh, I wish it were all as easy as just that," he answered. Somehow the dialogue seemed natural.

"So do I," she rejoined. "If I could think it, I'd be standing in the gutter there, along with those girls, instead of criticising with you here on the curb.—But you," she gave him a long divining glance, "your face shows what you are, and I guess you need something for which a Salvation Army conversion would be a mighty thin substitute."

A droll expression, queerly mixed with pity, did not so much diminish the keen edge of her shrewd observation as soften it.

"You're right," he answered candidly. "But I am a man without friends, so I'm thrown back upon spiritual consolation."

"The common way," she laughed silently. "But don't be bitter. Come walk a block with me, and mebbe I can help you. You never can tell."

Thus began his friendship with Gard Brown. She helped him, became what she termed his

" manager." She divined his perplexities without understanding them; she gauged his intellectual quandaries; she had reverence for his mind and knew him for a baby. With swift practical insight she immediately fixed upon what he could do; she sent him with a note to the great MacPherson, the militant editor of *The Pundit*.

" Humph," squeaked MacPherson, " if Miss Brown says you can, you can. Her judgment of men's infallible, young sir. Hang up your hat and go to work."

" What prompted you to help me? " Ruggles asked her later.

"Did you ever see a blind kitten with the look of the wise philosopher? " she explained.— " Well, I never did either."

XIV

THE SENATOR

MRS. CORLIS drove across town to the station to meet her father. The last division of her route lay through unlovely streets in which vice was squalor's only contrast. The sights, the noises, and the odors were repugnant to the pampered senses of the luxurious woman who rode through in her carriage. She wished, if possible, to screen them from her, and reclined far back in her seat. Then abruptly she reproached herself, asking if she were, indeed, as Chris Ruggles had intimated concerning all her class, a coward. Did she, for a truth, fear to encounter the coarse realities of life? Could her excessive delicacy endure the storm only when it was tempered, clamor only when set to music, objects only when they were adorned?

At the station she learned that the train was a quarter of an hour late. She grew restless sitting in the carriage and accordingly alighted and went inside. She walked about over the broad board platforms under the dusky iron vaulting, and, as she paced to and fro, she drew attention to herself, as with her always happened. The best defense

against scrutiny, she knew, was scrutiny of others, and so she forgot herself in her interest in them.

Men stood in groups here and there about the station. Some were talking privily in the ears of others; some were relating anecdotes; some loudly argued. They all were scheming or discussing, or manufacturing popularity. Mrs. Corlis recognized them for what they were, and, if she had not, the manner in which they showed they were acquainted with her own identity, would have informed her. Her instructed eye, indeed, distinguished their stripe and class; knew that they were Illinois and not national politicians, that the most of them hailed from down the state, and that probably not one of them owed allegiance to Boss McBride's machine. She was even certain that they came from middle Illinois, as apart from Egypt or Chicago, and from the small cities and the larger towns, instead of from the rural districts.

Mrs. Corlis, walking and waiting, measuring these men in diversion, felt her nerves thrill suddenly. This instinct for appraising men was in the blood, was it not? Had she been a man, she also would have been a politician.

The men gathered here, men of many sorts and various passions—intriguers, arguers, orators, sordid seekers of offices and loot, sentimentalists with a flux of language, lovers of power and influence

purely for its own sake, but all of them local leaders, chiefs in their town or district or clan—they had come to the station to meet their chief, to warm him with their devotion, to warn him with their knowledge, to welcome him home. Some would strive to get first word with him, some would cheer him with a bit of good news, some would whisper of defection in an unexpected quarter in order that he might not be left in darkness to make a mistake. But all were his sworn friends, his followers, his henchmen. They would shout for him, work for him, cheat for him, lie for him, who was their idol and pride, their statesman, their great man.

She felt that it was beautiful, this loyalty on their part and this leadership on his. She would have liked to shake hands with each and all of them and thank them personally for her father's sake.

And she thrilled again; she knew by the respect within their eyes that they recognized her for the daughter of their chief. The Dawes passion in her stirred; could a woman lead, she felt she could claim the succession from her father and prove her claim successfully. Had she only been a man, she would have been a natural adept in the art of managing men! She possessed the sympathy with human nature and the understanding of it, too; she knew men's passions and their in-

terests, how to lead, how to magnetize, how to combine some statesmanship with the necessary alloy of demagoguery.

The politicians crowded toward the gateway at the head of the long receiving platform, as the train slid in.

A tall, stoop-shouldered, thin old gentleman came shambling down the causeway, in his wake a young man carrying two hand bags. Mrs. Corlis, watching, caught a glimpse, and her heart smote her.

The old face seemed so wan and the faded eyes so sunken. The worn skin hung in wrinkles as if it were loose leather, and the long, bony arms flopped at his sides like plucked wings. Indeed, he looked not unlike some grotesque, giant bird. He wore black clothes—a black frock coat, open in front and flapping dismally. A silk hat was on his head, and it was not brushed with care. His shoes alone seemed finished and that was due to the porter of the Pullman car. Altogether he resembled the figure of some rich western farmer, or with his close-shaven upper lip, some Methodist bishop whose qualities were craft and piety.

He approached the gate. Of a sudden, at a point, the slouching figure stiffened, the old head came up, the beak of the nose showed like a blade, and even the straggling whisker seemed to bristle. His eye had sighted the reception that was await-

ing him. The old war-horse of politics sniffed excitement just ahead; it gladdened him. The goodly aspect of those assembled politicians recalled the old days of his prime.

He did not get away from them for three-quarters of an hour. He knew each man by name and called his home and district. He stood in the midst of what resolved itself into an impromptu reception, distributing hand-shakes and smiles with references that showed each man that he was remembered and checked off in his leader's mind. Cold-blooded as " Uncle Simeon " was reputed to be, and chilly-veined as, indeed, he looked, somehow strong magnetic currents radiated from his personality that hour in the depressing station, and produced in his followers a species of loyalty and devotion worth more than acclamation and vociferous cheers. How the effect was wrought, no man could say. Perhaps, in part, it was the influence of the Senator's great name and his reputation in the past. For Simeon E. Dawes was somewhat of a fetich in Illinois.

Some unique quality must have endowed him with power, for he was unaided by any large fund of vitality, and in temperament he was not especially genial. Nor could his intellectual processes be considered dazzlingly brilliant. While an effective speaker, he was neither a sentimental rhetorician, nor an irresistible logician. But he was

something of a philosopher and by virtue of that fact he had arrived at a creed of democracy and a recognition of the folly of affectation or assumed superiority. He had no pretenses, no pomposities. He genuinely respected each man, apart from what each man owned. He was, in fine, that character of a past generation, an old-fashioned American gentleman.

He had taken off his hat to his daughter as the press of friends first engulfed him. And she stood smilingly to one side, an amused and delighted spectator. Gradually he worked his way to her through the throng; it was an half hour's progress. But she did not grow impatient or tire of the spectacle, though she suffered standing so long on her feet.

When at last he drew clear of the clinging politicians for a moment and turned to her, she greeted him with shining eyes and put up her lips in daughterly duty to be kissed.

She saw his pride in her and how he seized the advantage of her compliant temper.

"Wood, Johnson, Crawford," he declared, and she perceived some shade of his Washington grand manner magnifying his deportment, "I want you to know my daughter. Let me make you acquainted with Mrs. Corlis. Victoria, these gentlemen are my friends. Mr. Johnson, of Sangamon county, Mr. Wood of La Salle, Mr. Crawford of Kankakee."

He continued introducing all his friends. With American adaptability they formed up in a string. He beckoned them to advance with his right hand and waved his left as he presented a new follower to his daughter.

It tickled her sense of humor. She liked the situation. She adjusted herself, smilingly, to the ordeal, divining how much a little tactful condescension might aid her father. Besides, the politician in her stirred and she warmed genially with the human democratic impulse. Never, not in Washington or Newport, had she been statelier or more kind; never had her dark eyes streamed greater fascination or her magnanimous spirit shone more brightly in her face.

The climax set her laughing and her laughter was provocative of mirth. An ancient farmer politician wagged her gloved hand furiously in his horny paw.

"I've heard of ye and yer goin's on, down in Pipeville, Clay county, whar I wuz raised. And I'm danged if ye ain't a chip off the old block, an' I knowed the Senator for forty years. Now if ye wuz a man, ye'd make as good a mixer as yer pop."

Mrs. Corlis was seated in the carriage and the Senator had his foot upon the step. Politicians clustered close.

"But where did you say you'd be found, Sen-

ator?" was the last question. "Where do you put up?"

"Oh, I'll be down at The Palmer House tonight, mebbe late, but I'll be there, boys. Of course I've got to go home with my daughter for awhile—she wants me, don't you, Vicky?"

"You can't escape. We shall keep him for dinner, gentlemen, and then we will send him down to you. He never will consent to stay all night with us, you know." She smiled upon them all.

"Too much for a plain old man," chuckled the Senator in a stage aside. "I ain't much on high life myself."

The Senator got into the carriage, while a murmur of approval came from his followers.

Mrs. Corlis, leaning toward them, declared with an arch smile,

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to take him away from you; but you will forgive the claims of affection, I know. I only wish I might have you all to dinner for my father's sake and my own pleasure."

She bowed and swept them a glance. The Senator raised his silk hat, as the blooded horses started the carriage with a rush. The men left behind felt the spell.

"My God, ain't she a hummer," summed up Crawford of Kankakee.

XV

THE SENATOR ACCEPTS

"I AM glad to have you close," she said, in the sincerity of a primitive affection. She slid her hand into his. She added with a fond smile, "And Uncle Johnny comes to-morrow. Then I shall have all my men."

He pressed her fingers in reply. He appeared too busy with his thoughts for audible response. She, watching, saw the careworn face grow keen—was it to the point of cunning?—then darken, as with lack of hope in any of his schemes.

But seemingly, as with an effort, he thrust aside his thoughts and turned to her his whole attention.

"When this convention hubbub is all over, daughter, and before the real campaign begins, you must go with me down to Primrose Hill, to our old house in the country there. As I look back, those were our happiest days, the days you were a little girl and I your father who filled the world for you."

"Simple, beautiful, happy days!" she whispered.

"Ah, that they were," he said. "Summer days

of quiet after winter's work, and I had all I ever wished to charm my leisure—books and views and my little girl. Do you remember, Vicky, the famous books we read together, Milton and old Virgil, and the majestic music of the verses?—And then, our garden."

"And the dogs, the dear dogs, father. Do not leave them out. I think still of their graves beneath the great elm tree, and I wonder if they are kept green."

"And the sunsets, and the river, and the run of the level prairies."

"Yes, father, yes; one cannot speak adequately of things too deep for words."

The carriage rolled on. Chicago's clamor, through whose midst they rode, could not vex the intimate communion of those two souls, who, though of generations which differ as does faith from want of faith, yet in intellectual sympathy were closely akin.

But, when the carriage crossed the bridge into the quieter North Side, Mrs. Corlis roused herself to practical activity. The exigency of pressing facts imposed upon her the immediate duty of persuasion.

"Pater," she commenced vivaciously, "who do you suppose is invited to meet you at dinner tonight? You can never guess, and so I shall in-

form you outright. It's Mr. and Mrs. McBride —Boss McBride."

She paused to note the effect of the name. There was no positive effect. Only a gray veil seemed to shut down over the features of the Senator, obscuring expression as fog may abruptly blot a landscape. Long years had made this neutralization a habit with the old politician, when any emergency obtruded; it was automatic, like an eyelid's fall, an instinctive defense.

She queried meekly,

"You are not displeased?"

He answered by asking in the driest tone,

"And McBride accepted, did he, knowing it was I he was to meet?"

"Yes, indeed," she said cheerfully. "He was told it was expressly to meet you. And, father, I wish you would be friendly with him—please, because I ask it"—a touch of her old childish insistence sweetened her blandishment for him. "I have taken so much trouble to prepare the way. He is willing, indeed, quite anxious, to let bygones be bygones; for in his heart, father, he admires you and he says you are a statesman."

The last word stirred the Senator.

"Listen, father, please, to me. That man is not all bad; I have found some unsuspected good things about him. I was surprised. He has either been maligned or he has not been given his due.

Some day I must tell you the story about his wife, and you will agree with me that the big, rough fellow possesses not only a heart but some knightly qualities—chivalrous traits I have seen gentlemen fail in."

She looked into his face, charmingly confident of her own power.

"Now then, confess, Mr. Statesman, I am not your own daughter for nothing." She bridled as she went on, "I am a bit of a politician too. The plot was mine, though I made Walter connive in it, and I have tamed the tiger, I believe, and all you will have to do will be to stroke the beast the right way to set it purring.—Please!—I'll never be content until you and the Boss have become the best of friends.—You won't be naughty and make all my work go for nothing, will you, Pater? Promise me!"

The sense of what she said seemed not to penetrate into his mind at once, and she continued to look up pleadingly. Then, gradually, the concealing veil dissolved before his countenance, but with it disappeared what in the face seemed most venerable. Eager cunning, grasping emulation peered forth from the old eyes, and the hawk nose and cavernous cheeks assumed a Machiavellian aspect.

"You don't say so," he abruptly gasped, and thrust his face into hers. "McBride's amenable, you mean? He's ready for a deal?"

He sank back against the seat, raising a hand and dropping it with a thwack upon his knee in his excitement.

"Thank God," he murmured, "thank God."

She was loath to acknowledge all she was forced to perceive; she preferred to admit only the joyfulness of his relief. Yet even that seemed to smack of unction, and, despite her will, she was impressed with the Phariseeism of that shaven upper lip.

The more she considered, the more his quick acquiescence seemed, in a way, shameful. Even she apparently had not then gauged the shiftiness of opportunistic politics. She had counted on a battle royal to bring him to her plan; she had expected citations of principle and parade of scruple against striking hands with one whom he had denounced again and again as "a modern freebooter and a chief danger to the nation." Instead (she could not but employ the simile her husband had used to describe what he declared her father would do) he had risen like some greedy trout and taken with a rush and gobble the bait she had fancied she must take pains to cast skillfully for his enticement. The prompt surrender sickened her.

She took herself to task, however. If she were doing man's work, she dared not allow woman's delicacy to intrude; she needed to remember that politics, if anything, is the science of compromise

and adjustment. She knew that well—had not her father always said that a reformer was one who insisted on the best way or none at all, while a politician secured whatever good could be gotten?

Besides she was loyal to her men; she was devoted to her father's cause. Even against principle would she not have helped him? Essentially she was a woman whose loyalty to her concrete passions would, in any crisis, dominate her abstract devotions. Remorse, given the proper exigency, she might have been willing to endure in the cause of love.

Mr. Corlis, entering his wife's sitting-room, found her ready to go downstairs. Some slight cynical amusement twinkled coldly in his pale eyes, while a half smile slightly lifted the close-cropped black mustache. Mrs. Corlis divined the subject of his mirth and anticipated the subject of his remarks; but she nevertheless experienced from his presence a relief. He, at least, was palpably what he appeared—handsome, fascinating, selfish, material, and he took pride in all these qualities. No duplicities of complexity were coiled in him; no shades of hypocrisy made problematical his hue.

"Yes," she answered the question of his man-

ner. "It was as you said it would be. You are always right. So clever."

"Humph, I wouldn't feel cut up about it, Victoria. Politics is the art of being spry. The thing is to keep in office, not to keep right, or even to keep honorable. I, for one, admire the adaptability of the old fox."

"Don't!" she begged, bending that he might not gloat over the pain in her eyes. Presently she asked hopelessly, "But—is not statesmanship more than politics? Are there no principles?"

"To succeed is to be a statesman; to fail is not even to be a politician," he retorted smartly. "And to retire on the grandest principle is to fail."

She sat in her stiffest attitude, elbow propped on knee, chin on her palm.

"But he was a statesman once," she murmured, as if to herself. "He had ideals he fought for—the Republic and the People."

"Oh, they all start that way," Mr. Corlis sneered. "Your rhetorical politician generally commences as a sentimentalist. The Senator in his youth, no doubt, was a true believer; but he has progressed until he's recognized as the wiliest old customer in the West. When they think they've cornered him, he's certain to break out in a new spot. It was Ransom six years ago; it will be McBride this year."

She rose with a sigh, and stood a moment pensively. Then a curious smile swept her face.

"Let us go down and manage the menagerie," she said.

On the stairs she glanced back at her husband, who was following her.

"To sum it all up, as they say nowadays, everything goes."

"Yes, anything," was Mr. Corlis' slight amendment to her flippancy.

XVI

THE MEETING OF THE MINDS

MRS. CORLIS made the dinner a success that night. She tuned the discordant strings assembled into harmony. The whole performance was wrought to minister to her father's good. Yet never had she so sharply realized what indeed she had long dimly guessed, that politics does not consist of great ideas, masterful leaderships, and noble devotions to democratic principles. She had before her eyes its play, its use of petty forces, its employment of the meanest arts, its flatteries and smiles. It was no better than society, she thought, and she understood why, if the father had succeeded in politics, the daughter had climbed to eminence in society.

Senator Dawes looked, indeed, not unlike the elder worthies of the Republic. If not a reproduction, he was a respectable imitation. His ascetic countenance, his worn eyes, his shaven lip, the natural gravity of his features, and the dignity of his bearing, were calculated to impress men. He would have become the Roman Senate, and he was more than a passable ornament in the American.

He inclined to McBride, however, to a degree his daughter felt was due only to distinction. He smiled so largely, lent so much attention, addressed his remarks so pointedly to the Boss, and so marked his appreciation of every utterance that fell from the Irishman's lips, that Mrs. Corlis grew half ashamed of the spectacle. Vainly she sought relief in her husband's eye; he would not respond. She could see how he was enjoying the exhibition—smiling, cynical, his humor pleased with the asinine possibilities in venerable old men, and with the exigency that promoted a vulgar Irish boss to equality with a famous statesman.

Yet, as the dinner advanced, she could not but perceive that the tactics which had appeared to her a mere display of bad taste, were winning the battle for the Senator. McBride apparently was captivated; he squirmed delightedly under the fulsome flattery, much like a fat toad that feels the sun's caress. He warmed to the Senator and showed his pleasure by diffusing a rank good-fellowship. Evidently the personal admiration he had confessed for Senator Dawes was not a pleasant invention of a dinner guest. Ignorantly he respected the high prestige of Illinois' "grand old man," and, therefore, nothing could be sweeter to his taste or more gratifying to his pride than to be made so much of openly, "to be played for" so

strongly by the statesman he had looked up to as "out of his class."

After all, then, Mrs. Corlis could not but conclude, she was witnessing still another demonstration of her father's consummate knowledge of human nature. It was a new chapter in the book, "On the Government of Men," and it might be entitled, "The Art of Charming Bull-Necked Gentlemen From the Slums, or Coarse Flattery for Coarse Personages."

On the other hand, Mr. Corlis gained in her eyes. He was incapable of making an exhibition of himself; he never was ridiculous. He managed McBride with dexterous ease, deftly flattered him, considered him without the appearance of doing so, and never proved wheedling in his blandishments or ungraceful, though he stooped to conquer. He sat at the head of the table, elegant, cool, and armed cap-a-pie, a perfectly poised man of the world, possessed of the knack of getting on with any man, yet never himself a man whom any other would think of slapping on the back. Such was the eminently feminine judgment of Mrs. Corlis.

Meanwhile she had Mrs. McBride on her hands. And, had she known it, her gracious treatment of the Boss's wife was no small factor in the disposition of the Boss to be amenable to the Senator's persuasion.

Mrs. McBride was overdressed and overawed, but instinctively she snuggled up to her hostess as if confident of that lady's kind indulgence. She simpered much at first, and did not know what to do. Her meekness was her defense, however, for she seemed not so much badly bred as just not bred at all. Once she realized the breadth of Mrs. Corlis' protecting wing, her fears subsided and she purred comfortably like a little cat.

Gretchen had expected that Mrs. Corlis would prove to be a starched-up lady, bent first of all upon convincing her inferior of her own infinite superiority. Instead, when Mrs. Corlis called, Gretchen found in her a woman who made no pretensions, who seemed content to let her quality speak for itself. As she said to her "Mike" afterwards, with that just perception which at intervals is given to simplicity, "It must be she knows that I and everybody else knows who she is, so it don't worry her whether other people know or not."

As the last course was served, the talk turned upon the political condition of the state. Egypt was what interested every one.

As Mr. Corlis succinctly stated it,

"Does the dog wag the tail, or the tail the dog, is what we want to know."

"The Senator can tell," Boss McBride said flatteringly. "Did Governor Ransom ever con-

sort much with them Silver fellers until this last winter?"

"Well," said Senator Dawes, judicially considering his answer; "well, I guess Randolph always cherished a kindly feeling for the heresy and the advocates of the heresy; but by himself he couldn't stir up Egypt the way she's boiling now. Randolph sort of saw the chance and he jumped into the lead, that's all. But don't mistake, gentlemen. Allow me to impress it on you now, this is no cabal, or kick of disgruntled politicians; it's a regular Mississippi flood, and, if all right-thinking men don't get together hard, it will not only sweep the Republican party out of power in the nation, in the state, and in the cities"—he tapped the table to emphasize the cities for McBride—"but it will put the country back in civilization fifty years."

Mrs. Corlis brightened. The statesman was appearing now. The two men looked at the Senator to hear more.

He continued,

"The very fact that such an astute and experienced politician as Randolph Ransom has cast in his fortunes with that cause, is to my mind pretty conclusive evidence of the movement's magnitude. I've known Randolph ever since he was a boy; I knew his father intimately before him; and I tell you frankly, gentlemen, that you people in Chi-

cago are miscalculating if you think the Governor does not know what he's doing, where he's headed for. He does, he does, every time."

"How do they feel about our row in Washington?" presently asked Mr. Corlis.

"Deeply concerned, deeply so," replied the Senator, shaking his head oracularly. "I saw the President a half hour Thursday afternoon. He has an eye closely fixed on the situation here, gentlemen. He urged upon me not once nor twice the necessity of our getting together in order that the purpose of the Silver men in the convention may be frustrated. His last words to me were, 'Tell my friends, all my friends, that Illinois this year sounds the key-note for the whole country. Let not that note be Silver.'"

"He did not advise that we come out squarely against Silver, did he?" Mr. Corlis asked, with his disbelieving smile.

"He is not prepared for that as yet. He doesn't want men like Governor Ransom read fairly out of the party, without chance for repentance or time in which to change their attitude. I think his idea is that Illinois Republicans, by getting together and avoiding unseemly quarrels, should rather discountenance Free Silver as an issue than by directly condemning it antagonize the Free Silver element who are still in the party."

"The President, I take it, does not wish us to

anticipate the action of the National Convention two years hence," said Mr. Corlis, by way of interpreting the Senator's statement.

"It is too early, he believes. Silver by that time may have hung itself, if allowed plenty of rope. Consequently he hopes rather for party harmony at this time than for party determination," explained the Senator.

"Humph," ejaculated Mr. Corlis, "he calls for a modern miracle by which he would have us mix oil and water in a perfect blend. Just like him, that."

"I'm with you, Senator, on that proposition," declared McBride. "Harmony won't hurt none; it's a mighty good time for us to get together strong. Them's the Senator's and my sentiments exact."

In this "pow-wow," as he styled it in his thoughts, and not all of which he understood, the Boss shrewdly discerned the offering of the olive branch. He gratefully signified his acceptance of the same. He agreed openly with Senator Dawes, because he knew that the Senator thereby tacitly pledged himself to cease his war upon the Cook County organization and to recognize the Machine as entitled to a share at Springfield and in Washington.

Mrs. Corlis arose, when coffee was served, and

took Mrs. McBride away with her, leaving the men alone with their politics and wine.

Once in the drawing-room with her guest Mrs. Corlis realized how little they had in common. There was a moment of embarrassment, until the hostess solved the problem by conducting the flaxen Gretchen to the nursery and exhibiting contrivances for the care of babies.

Gretchen glowed and found her tongue. She sat down with the great lady under the light of a gas jet and babbled of children. Mrs. Corlis was surprised to find the prattle interesting. The maternal sense was stronger in her than she herself supposed, for its objects in her case had not been her children so much as her husband and her father. Without understanding why, she spoke to her guest of her own two children at school in the East, whom she feared she had neglected more than she should in her occupation with social life and affairs of ambition.

Mrs. McBride showed her sympathy in her own way.

And Mrs. Corlis held Gretchen's hand and patted it, while that child, who was a wife, gurgled about her own babies and their father "Mike."

"And Mr. McBride," Mrs. Corlis said, "he is very fond of children, I know. A good husband is always a good father."

"He is both," declared Gretchen with conviction. "I'm so glad you think good of him, Mrs. Corlis. It takes his own family to know how real good he is. Oh, Mike is a first-class family man."

"I can well believe that," Mrs. Corlis answered. "His gentleness to you is evidence enough. And, when he was here before, he told me something about his sons and about his 'little girl,' as he calls you."

"He is so good—he is the best man of them all," bleated Gretchen rapturously. "And he's never said an unkind word to me, Mrs. Corlis, not one in all these four years he's married me. He's never thrown it up at me, not once, what he took me from, and what I'd be to-day if he hadn't."

The German Madonna face looked up at Mrs. Corlis, and the eyes had pearls in them. She prattled on,

"I don't suppose I ought to talk to you this way, Mrs. Corlis, and perhaps you didn't know of it or you wouldn't have had me here. But, if I ain't too impudent, you have such a way with you, and I feel just as safe with you as I do with Mike himself."

"You must not be troubled, Gretchen—you will let me call you Gretchen, I am sure. I'm coming to your house often; I dearly want to see the babies and to play with them, if you will let me."

"Let you!" The soft eyes shone. "I should think I would. Why, I'd do anything you said. You see, I thought beforehand I'd be awful scared of you, you're such a high-up swell and all that. But I'm not a teeny bit, you are so sweet and lovely, and you've got something so good and motherly about you."

Mrs. Corlis smiled at the impression she had produced, and stroked the soft fair hair.

"The idea seems a trifle foreign to my style, dear Gretchen, but perhaps—let's pray God it's so."

From smiling she fell into a musing fit, curling Gretchen's hair between her fingers in her abstraction. Gretchen sat worshipful and mute.

Presently: "I have been too proud and too ambitious, I'm afraid, and I want to be a little kind and humble before I die. Do you understand me in the least, I wonder? Perhaps not, but it doesn't matter, dear. It's only that I've done too much to make distinctions between people, to help some to be exalted and to tread upon others' necks. And now, too late, it comes to me that I need to love and sympathize a little in the common human way. The failures, after all, count up for so much in the world, and I have had to do only with the successes—the hard, the false successes. Gretchen, you will be my friend and help me, will you not?"

Gretchen looked up with a pitying and a grateful face.

"Of course I will," she stoutly said. "I am that proud you want me for your friend. The way most ladies treat me, I'd suppose I wasn't good enough to do their wash." She smiled in almost smug content. "But I guess you know whether I ain't or not."

XVII

BEFORE THE CONVENTION

UNCLE Simeon Dawes "put up" at the Palmer House "straight enough." As he informed his daughter, it would never do at this time of stress and strain for him "to quit herding with the plain people." He could not be expected to consort much with such an unmitigated aristocrat as his own daughter, at this crisis anyhow.

As a matter of fact, Senator Dawes needed to be close to the heart of things at all hours and at all moments. His hand must feel the throttle, his touch gauge the pulse, his experience and resource be immediately available to cope with circumstances as they arose and to bend opinion while it remained ductile.

Therefore he took a parlor and a suite in the Palmer House. On one side were the headquarters of the State Central Committee, and on the other those of the Cook County Republican Club.

The Sunday and Monday, which intervened between the Saturday of the Senator's arrival in Chicago and the Tuesday when the Convention would convene, were consumed with the mending

of small matters. But no crisis developed. Plans were yet embryonic, and combinations, if such did exist, too unconfessed. Better stated: Issues had not yet been sharply joined; animosities had not come to a head; alliances were not yet consummated; while the forces that governed, not sure in their own minds of exactly what they wanted, refrained from the use of influence and persuasion. But conflict was in the air; the suppressed electricity was felt, and rumors and reports flew thick as the city's smoke.

Senator Dawes did not get beyond the threshold of his rooms those two days. He was constantly engaged in receiving visitors, of whom all sorts and sizes filled his outer chamber. "Uncle Simeon" was no "Chinese god"; to seclude himself had never been his policy. He kept an open door; at Washington he would do impossible things for man or woman who hailed from Illinois, and when in the state he was accessible to any one of his constituents, which meant any one who called. In fact, he thought it was no time wasted to be bored by any fool who chose to bore him, and in this manner he had come to be acquainted with thousands of the solid citizens and plain people of Illinois. The Senator considered that he never knew when or where he might need some humble friend.

There were degrees, however, to "Uncle Sim-

eon's" hospitality this season at the Palmer House. In the outer parlor the many herded, and they were a host. There the Senator entered every hour or so, passed through their midst, smiled, shook hands with each man of them as if he were a long lost friend, perhaps vouchsafed a word or two, rarely a promise. He evinced, moreover, a surprising faculty of shaking off a too importunate or too enthusiastic visitor, yet without giving great offense.

In a second room sat groups of four or five, men come from this or that locality, either delegates or substitutes, or powers behind petty thrones. To these the Senator appeared, when summoned; for them an open cigar-box lay upon the marble-topped table. The Senator slipped into the room with an air of mysterious inscrutability, treated each man as if he were a confidential friend, leaned a hand upon his shoulder, whispered in his ear, nodded a solemn head upon receiving the advice. When a cheap politician quit that second room, he carried away an impression of how important the Senator thought him, and of how much the Senator intrusted to his discretion. In reality the Senator had extracted whatever gold there was and had deposited a brick in its stead.

There remained a third room, the sanctum. Cigars (two for a quarter) and bottles of sound

rye and bourbon were articles displayed upon the mantel-shelf. There lounged Crawford of Kankakee, Johnson of Sangamon, and Wood of La Salle. They drank the whisky and smoked the cigars. They conferred frequently with "Uncle Simeon's" secretary, a lean young man, tall as a telegraph pole and buzzing like the wires with news.

The Senator spent his unoccupied time in there also. He smoked an occasional cigar and now and then took a nip of the Kentucky dew. Also he conferred and sometimes he swore, that is, after looking first to see who were in the room and then at the windows and doors. When he swore his profanity was vigorously voluminous, and yet it acted as a sort of moral pinch of snuff, for afterward he was particularly mild and easy. That the now sainted statesman ever had the habit, is one of the state secrets of Illinois.

Into the sanctum during those two days walked many leaders, but at no time entered McBride or Mr. Corlis or any of the Cook County men.

Within those three rooms in those two days "Uncle Simeon" played many parts. He simulated in succession the pious respectability, the honest farmer, the ponderous statesman, the courteous old-fashioned gentleman, the confident politician, the abused and betrayed old man. He

passed through the transformations deftly, a little thing accomplishing the whole change.

The shoulders fell, the mouth drooped, the voice took on a doleful tone, and he appeared the martyred friend of the people, the noble man with the breaking heart, whom rascally politicians were victimizing. A lift of the chin, a solemn light upon the brow, and behold, Illinois' great statesman, a prop of the nation, the pillar of the state. A drawl, a flat tone, a loosening of the gaunt anatomy, and lo, you have farmer Dawes, who calls Cuba " Cuby," as he draws the back of his hand across his mouth and nostrils. A few curves and an added deliberation to his movements, and you see the country gentleman of old-time stately breeding; you notice how small his foot is and the delicacy of his long thin hands. Ah, it is a circus to watch " Uncle Simeon's " metamorphoses a half-day through.

An old friend of the Senator, a rich man, who had made some of his money out of politics, dropped in to see how things were getting on. He was thick and big, given to corpulence and humor. As a Connecticut Yankee by birth he had a cynical insight into motives and the nature of the majority of mankind.

He stood up close to the lean and wrinkled statesman, while the two clasped hands.

" Well, Senator, I thought I'd just come up to

see how things are with you. You know you have my best wishes."

"Cordial thanks, Bissell. A man has need of all the friends he's got, and I need 'em every one just now."

"Well, I hope you've got a-plenty, Senator. How does it look?"

"Hopeful, hopeful, that's all that can be said." The dolorous tone matched the dolorous look of the old man's face. "They're pressing me pretty hard, for all that's in 'em, I guess. And they aren't above any methods to defeat me."

Bissell smiled his broadest smile; he knew the Senator's bait for pity.

"Oh, I guess you can teach those fellows a few tricks yet, Senator. I'd like to see the chap can teach you anything—humph, Senator, he ain't been born."

"It's hard to be compelled to expect nothing except fraud and knavery, nevertheless," the Senator complained. "I have to depend a great deal on men's words. Now, if I can accept what the boys personally promise me, there won't be any trouble to speak of about my getting the indorsement of the Convention. But I have to take it on credit, and some of the boys may go back on me." He shook his head.

"Pshaw, Senator, cheer up," Bissell said reassuringly; "you've lost less from that cause in poli-

tics than any man I know. When the fellers tell you a thing, usually it sticks. You've got a way with you, you know. Come, you needn't look so injured, I'm not jollying; I'm telling you God's truth."

"I hope so, I hope so," replied the Senator with unction, "as much for their sake as my own. It always comes as a shock to me to meet with the perfidious side of human nature; old as I am, I never have gotten used to it."

"Yes, you're an innocent, you are, Senator," laughed Bissell. "And when you get down to brass tacks, I guess you've suffered less from treachery than any man I know in public life. You've no cause to be cynical concerning your friends, Senator." And Bissell actually winked. "Well, I guess you will pull through. When you croak with an injured air, I always know you're fixed pretty much all right."

Although for the Convention week the headquarters of the Cook County Republican Club were next Senator Dawes, the seat of power remained in its accustomed quarters in a back room off McMahon's saloon in Clark street, just in the rear of "The Obelisk." There, ordinarily, any "worker" might get audiences with the Boss any day. In that little dingy room he sat almost every week day in the year from eleven o'clock to four,

when he left to drive his fast pair of trotters until he went home to dinner and to Gretchen. There his cold luncheon was served to him, and, while he ate, he listened.

A low black desk separated him from his callers; behind it he sat in a stuffed cushioned chair and chewed a fat cigar. He seldom opened his mouth except to question sharply; commonly he preferred to nod his willingness or his refusal. The men who came in " to see the old man " stood in awe; their genial Boss was strictly " bizness " during business hours. He was " the chief," a heavy-jowled, thick-eyebrowed man, with close-cut black hair, bull neck and amorphous countenance, who heard reports impatiently, yet attentively, and issued orders that were as dictatorial as they were explicit. There were no appeals from McBride.

Not only orders but at times much money, it was understood, passed across that low black desk, the money in the reverse direction from the orders. McBride was noted not only for the close grip he kept upon the *personelle* of the organization, but for his personal and irresponsible handling of the revenues. Men known to a portion of the public, but not necessarily to the politicians, frequently slipped into the back room and paid down in coin (McBride would accept no checks) tithes from gaming places and from brothels.

A door and entry separated the back room from the rear of the saloon. Sometimes it was open, sometimes shut; but in the entry always a Cerberus was on guard. He was a grizzled, rotund, common creature, but gifted with the imagination of the Celt. A long consorting with politicians had supplied him with a curious knowledge, so that from the point of view of the precincts he had become a shrewd critic of men and affairs. Moreover, his was not a humorous imagination; he took the whole thing as seriously as if he had been a judge upon the bench.

He knew whom to admit at once and whom to hinder; he knew the moods and habits of his master, and "workers" knew he was worth assiduous cultivation.

"The statesmen," he announced to a new ward lieutenant, who had not yet "arrived," and hence needed some instruction, "the statesmen, young feller, are just now in solemn council behind this here door. All the big bugs of the organization, I want you to understand, are conferrin' with the Boss himself. If you'se was in there now you'd hear enough political wisdom to set Ireland free. They have heads, them fellers. Some are aldermen in the City Hall, and they know a heap about government, I'm tellin' you. Sometimes I get a whiff myself of what's doin' through a crack, and I want to say, young feller, they will compare

favorably with the debates in the Congress of the United States.

"You want to know what I think about how the Convention is a-comin' out—you want to know, do you? Well, them yaps up here from Egypt, they may have the thinks, but thinks, I'm tellin' you, won't organize no convention where Mr. McBride's a-sittin' in. Them yaps'll realize before they get enough that they're up against trained statesmen, when they set out to buck the Cook County organization, I'm tellin' you."

XVIII

THE CONVENTION HALL

MRS. CORLIS and her uncle, Mr. Jarrett, had seats upon the platform in the Convention hall.

The platform, like a promontory which half cuts a lake in two, commanded the whole auditorium. Before it lay the pit, a flat oval, in which the chairs of the delegates were ranged. Behind it, and enveloping its sides, extended a plateau whereon the desks of newspaper correspondents and reporters were set, as well as many benches for favored spectators. Round about the entire hall, in steep terraces up to the very roof, circled the galleries for the people, some fifteen thousand seats.

The platform itself was broad. Its most conspicuous feature was furnished by the thick, hardwood table, without cloth or ornament, which was centrally placed in front. Behind the table extended a row of capacious leather chairs and behind the row, in turn, were the seats of honor, a score or two.

Mrs. Corlis from her place of vantage on the platform could sweep the house. As usual, she

achieved a picturesque effect, and people wondered who she was until they guessed that she could be no one else, of course, than the daughter of their Senator, the niece of J. J. J., the wife of W. H. D. Corlis.

The galleries were packed, for the newspapers had exploited the three-cornered fight, and all Chicago talked of nothing else, and made bets as to the outcome. The galleries cheered their heroes, applauded the band, cracked jokes and ate peanuts. The convention was a minstrel show, plus grand opera, for them.

A thousand and more delegates sat crowded together within the oval arena. The aisles between the grand divisions of space were themselves narrow, so that nothing distinguished the delegations from the different counties except the slim poles which bore aloft the placards announcing the respective county names. Besides such official standards, there were here and there other poles and placards which presented, in big, black letters, mottoes and sentiments, generally a proclamation, sometimes a challenge, perhaps a taunt.

For example, to the left of the platform, where in deep array sat the Cook County men, a big square transparency twirled above their heads exhibited successively four sides: " Regular Organization "— "McBride "—" Cook County Republican Club "—" We Swallow Jonah." Above the

transparency itself, upon the end of the pole, was stuck a gilded whale with a wide mouth, open. The device was supposed to signify to intelligent observers that the loyalty for which the "Machine" was noted pledged anticipatively its support to the Convention's choice, however distasteful that choice might prove.

The delegates upon the right marshaled themselves under a simply framed canvas, lettered on both sides so plainly that the topmost gallery might read: "Egypt"—"Restore Silver to Its Rights." Erected alongside this canvas was a flat transparency purporting to constitute a portrait. Underneath appeared: "Governor Randolph Ransom."

In the center, the station of the middle and upper counties of the state, two ornamental placards were conspicuously upreared. One was a daub, inscribed, "The Grand Old Man of Illinois." The second likewise was a daub, underwritten, "Your Uncle Simeon." Unquestionably the purpose of each sorry proclamation was to glorify the same leader.

The galleries had applauded each standard as the respective delegations marched into the hall. Governor Ransom's photograph received some applause, but the Silver placard immediately following was greeted with hisses and hoots. The agricultural delineations of Senator Dawes

elicited some cheering of a rather perfunctory sort. But first sight of the gilded whale set the enthusiasm loose. The Cook County Machine tramped in, the redoubtable McBride himself at the head. He strode along unmoved under that hail of cheers, the great black head of him held squarely, no smile upon his powerful face. He plumped into his seat, the first next the aisle on the platform's left, and looked about unconcernedly, exchanging a remark or two with Mayor Timothy Murphy, who filled the next chair.

The galleries were packed with Cook County Machine sympathizers, it was clear. That had been a feature of the scheme of Corlis and McBride, when they had captured the State Central Committee a year ago, and were thereby enabled to name Chicago as the Convention city. The Cook men, as hosts having charge of the arrangements, controlled the distribution of the tickets of admission. They had been allotted in blocks to the ward leaders, with orders to have contingents of shouters present. That the contingents were present for duty was plain.

Mrs. Corlis surveyed the scene through her glass, studying with some intentness the several features. Beside her, his head not much above her shoulder, sat J. J. J. His dark eyes, under half-closed, heavy lids, had a far-away look; yet

to have supposed that he missed anything would have been a sad mistake.

"Vicky," he rumbled in his deep voice, "lend me a quarter. You always have money to burn and I haven't a scurvy copper. I'm thirsty, and I'm going out and get a glass of beer. I'll be right back."

When he returned, he settled deeply into his seat.

"Vicky," he said with a little chuckle, "Vicky, we're going to see a lot of human nature, regenerate and unregenerate, before we get through. Those galleries up there think they've some to do with it, and those gentlemen, the delegates, think they decide. But the Bosses, they'll run the delegates; that you'll see. Who runs the Bosses, you won't see. But, since you always like to know, I'll give you the tip. Your old Uncle Johnny, sitting back here unnoticed; you must always count him one, when anything is doing. It always has been so; it's going to be the same here now. As they say in the West, watch my smoke, Vicky."

But the Convention hummed importantly, as if its master were not watching it. And the unknown master moodily looked on—saw galleries go wild, saw delegations with their heads together, saw politicians busy and important, saw McBride chewing a toothpick masterfully, saw Senator Dawes revolving in his mind sentences to sway the

assembly, saw Corlis smiling in his own conceit. And the master, one of that new American breed of world masters who have succeeded grand seignior, war-lord, orator and parliamentarian—he blinked and yawned a little, and sought, with covert hand, the fingers of his niece, happy because he had her company assured to him for hours, and because he was certain that the Convention would gratify her pride.

The Chairman of the State Central Committee, exercising the prerogative of his place, raised the heavy wooden mallet and brought it down upon the hardwood table. The blow not only dented the tough grain, but called the Convention to order. It was just twenty-six minutes before noon.

The Convention came speedily to order. Every one had been waiting for nearly two hours, time enough to reduce their restlessness and assure their subordination.

After some brief formalities the Chairman named for Temporary Chairman of the Convention, Senator Simeon E. Dawes. A roar greeted the announcement. It was vociferous in the center of the Convention and perfunctory from the Cook County men, except for the knot of reformers, some sixty strong, who represented the "better element" minority of Chicago. As for Egypt, she sat sullen.

While it is customary for conventions to accept

the nominee of the party committee for Temporary Chairman, there are occasions when a strong opposition to the faction in control of the Committee has shown fight at once and elected to test respective strengths at the outset. Would the "Silverites," the delegates from Egypt, put up a candidate against Senator Dawes, who had obviously been named by the new Dawes-McBride-Corlis combination?

True, the Egyptians sulked, but Governor Ransom gave no sign. He sat at the head of his cohorts on the right of the platform. His arms were folded and his head was bowed; he did not look up.

It was moved, seconded and carried that the vote of the Convention as a whole be cast for Senator Dawes as Temporary Chairman. There was no dissent.

"Is this here Convention going to pan out a regular love-feast, a four-flush thunder storm?" inquired a disgusted delegate of his neighbor.

"The combination has shown its hand and Ransom don't dare call it, even. He always was a first-class bluff, and what we'd better be doing is getting into the band-wagon before all the seats are gone." Thus commented a shrewd political trough-feeder from middle Illinois.

"Guess it's all settled and we can go home. 'Uncle Simeon' for senator and some Chicago

silk-stockin' for governor—that's the bill. Never seen good intentions beat out money yet." So surmised a weak-kneed Silverite, who had bent before the storm before he got into the Convention, and proposed to bend to another now that he had crawled in on his belly.

The Chairman of the State Central Committee presented Senator Simeon E. Dawes to the Convention. The Temporary Chairman received an ovation, as the newspapers reported it next morning. The galleries got up; McBride led the demonstration of the Cook County men; northern and middle Illinois saluted with enthusiasm their old leader. Governor Ransom himself was on his feet, according his one-time chief a dignified recognition. Egypt, at Ransom's back, cheered the man for the sake of the past, but their cheers had a formal ring.

Mrs. Corlis was standing on her chair, her Uncle Johnny upon his.

"Ain't it grand?" he shouted in her ear. "Five minutes by the watch. He's a grand old Roman. It takes Americans to yell like this."

They yelled for "Uncle Simeon," for "The Grand Old Man;" in a lull, some one cried for "Illinois' Grand Uncle," and a laugh went up amid the cheers. They were in dead earnest and in roaring farce at the same time. Men, who were screaming in genuine admiration for the Senator,

winked an off eye at a neighbor, as if to say, "We mean it, by hookey, but we do. Can't we just make cussed asses of ourselves, though?" The neighbor, he winked back, "Let her loose, Bill; throw her wide open; it's a mighty good excuse for being boys again."

Mrs. Corlis, on her chair, caught the infection of the multitude. She wanted to laugh and to cry. She would have thrown them kisses to thank them for their fervor and then have urged them into it —"Go it, go it, good fellows, go it!"—in the same fashion men "sic" dogs into a fight.

The cheering suddenly died down. The galleries relapsed into spectators. The delegates, having "let off steam," coolly grinned at one another and sat themselves down, at first in patches, then in blocks, and finally *in toto*. They looked inordinately pleasant, as if in the second stage of contemplation of a good joke.

Senator Dawes, as is the custom, addressed the Convention before he assumed the performance of the duties of Temporary Chairman. He was a type of a great past, the last representative, perhaps, of the men who had fought the Civil War for the preservation of the Union. He was rugged old Cromwellian timber, inlaid with Jeffersonian tolerance and smoothed at the edges with modern humanism. An old-fashioned dignity sat on his gaunt frame; the authoritativeness of the old

style lawyer and preacher informed his delivery. His speech was studded with homely quaintnesses and colloquialisms of the farm, yet, originally, he must have moulded his orations on classic models, on Hamilton and Webster.

It was an able speech, sufficiently eloquent; still more, it was an adroit speech, consummately tactful. It appealed to the past and the party's former glories, and the stalwart body of the convention asked for nothing more. Present questions were ingenuously ignored and "burning issues" glossed. Silver was not once mentioned. Practically it was a plea for party regularity and that with the least disturbance of dangerous subjects. It was the brief presented in behalf of those in office who desired perpetuity and immunity from worry. It illustrated one truth, despite itself, that no man can live vitally in other than his own generation.

XIX

THE PERMANENT CHAIRMAN

THE sun rays, entering by the western windows high up in the wall, by the time Senator Dawes had finished his address fell at an acute angle with the Convention floor. The radiance formed an obscurity of golden dust, flaming against the eastern galleries after traversing in long lights the body of the hall.

Under this haze and glory, this illuminated obscuration, the Convention settled itself seriously to business, or attempted to do so. For expectation electrified the air. The word somehow had crept about that Egypt meant to fight when the time had come to choose a Permanent Chairman. Ransom, it was whispered, had been reluctant openly to oppose his old chief, or to refuse him the complimentary honor of the Temporary Chairmanship. But the matter of the Permanent Chairmanship appeared to the Governor in another light; the contest for it would constitute a trial of strengths, and to secure it would be to gain an advantage in the organization of the Convention, which would insure the power of appointment to the committees.

Senator Dawes declared the Convention open to nominations for the office of Permanent Chairman.

Instantly a delegate was up, demanding recognition. In twenty words he presented the name of Governor Randolph Ransom of Clay County. But Egypt did not cheer—what applause there was came desultorily from scattered Silver men in the center ranks. The mercurial galleries, even, felt the grimness of this mute reception of their leader's name by the Silver delegates. Yet Ransom and not another had been put forward in order to pick up every vote possible and make a show for Silver at the very outset.

Half a minute later State Senator Brady arose amid the Chicago men. He secured the Chairman's recognition, despite a score of delegates who were demanding it. The Convention noted the collusion. Brady had a bull's throat and a voice like a trumpet; moreover, he was notoriously the official megaphone of McBride.

Quiet greeted him; delegates and galleries strained to hear whose name he would pronounce. He loved to talk, but he had the Boss's order to "cut it mighty short." He spoke two hundred words and placed in nomination the name of Walter H. D. Corlis of Cook County.

The Machine "let loose" a yell, and the packed galleries howled approval. Egypt ex-

hibited the excitement of surprise, and the lean Ransom walked about, advising with this lieutenant and with that. Upper Illinois was "left guessing;" it was clear the Chicago Traction magnate had been "sprung" on them. They did not relish the nomination unqualifiedly, but they had witnessed their chief's arbitrary recognition of Senator Brady, and now Crawford, Wood and Johnson were busily passing the word that it was understood Cook County was to have the Permanent Chairmanship; consequently, the bulk of the conservative stalwarts sat in stolid acquiescence.

The Chairman ordered the Convention to a ballot. Some delay in preparing for it ensued, and, meantime, discussions broke out everywhere.

The division on the coming ballot meant a square issue between the two ends of the state, Egypt and Chicago. Each had named the man after its own heart. The question was, for whom would the majority of the remainder of the state, comprising, in whole, between one-third and one-half of the delegates, elect to cast their votes?

Men generally accepted as "correct" the report of the new "combine" between Boss McBride and "Uncle Simeon," and regarded the nomination of W. H. D. Corlis, the political "angel" of the former, and the son-in-law of the latter, as confirming the same. Therefore, it was inferred, the Senator's entire strength would be

given to Corlis. What was the Senator's strength? That constituted the unknown factor.

Governor Ransom, who had his enemies, also had his friends in all parts and in unsuspected quarters. Outside Egypt the number of those who loved him well exceeded the number of those who would accept the gospel of Free Silver at his hands —to what extent? In other words, what proportion of his enormous personal following would support him now? Such was the "figuring" by shrewd forecasters.

Sharing in the general restlessness of this interval, Mrs. Corlis left her seat to Uncle Johnny's care, stepped off the platform to the newspaper plateau, and made her way to a desk occupied by Chris Ruggles. The reporter she found tapping his pencil nervously upon the desk and looking off across the shifting groups, quite oblivious of her near approach.

Her shadow fell upon him, and recognizing her, he got upon his feet. A warm wave of mingled pleasure and embarrassment suffused his honest face.

"Chris," she said directly, aware of what little time the reporter at this moment might have to spare, "which is Governor Ransom? I have not seen him for over fifteen years, and I want to recognize him."

Ruggles sought to point him out.

"I don't see him just this moment, Mrs. Corlis. You can't mistake him, though. He's a tall man, slim as a pole, with a small head, thin, high features, and what I've heard politicians style the eyes of old Nick himself. Sometimes he has the manners of a Kentucky colonel and at others those of a steamboat roustabout."

She smiled.

"You are vivid in description, Chris. But I'm taking your attention and you need it at this time."

"No," he replied, "I haven't a thing to do until the ballot is announced." The while his glance continued to search for the Governor among the confused mass on the floor.

"I have heard his oaths are famous," Mrs. Corlis talked on. "He used to come to the house when I was a girl at home. I remember he always made me think of a walking-stick, stuck on with a head—you know what I mean—and he had grand manners then, at least when ladies were about. But he chewed tobacco." She came to a dead stop, as if the last fact had occasioned some conclusion in her mind, as it might have in her life.

But Chris did not seem to have noticed; so presently she added,

"My father used to say he had the best politi-

cal brains in the state, and he was barely thirty then."

"He has them still, I guess," rejoined Ruggles, "though he is a rather low order of politician, I suppose. But there he is now—see him? He's standing up—he's six feet and over—you can't miss him, he looks so unlike other men. But the voting has begun."

"Good-by and thank you, Chris. When you have time, come over to me, please; I want Mr. Jarrett, my uncle, to know you."

Mrs. Corlis, as she turned to retrace her steps to her seat, noticed a tall young woman, who had just come up, staring at her. Somehow, too, she felt the tall young woman's eyes in her back, as she walked away. When she had gotten as far as the platform, curiosity caused her to look back. The young woman was bending over the reporter, imperiousness in her mien, it appeared to Mrs. Corlis. She surmised, "She must be the guardian angel Walter mentioned."

Throughout the balloting, Mrs. Corlis, sitting by J. J. J.'s side, strangely ignored the excitement as to the outcome, to wonder concerning the young woman. Used to distinguish types as she was, she was impressed; she fancied she had hardly seen anywhere a more striking-looking creature. Naturally, extreme height alone rendered Ruggles' friend conspicuous; but, Mrs. Corlis de-

cided, her long lines of limb and body possessed original grace, while the pale gold hair and the large, clear-cut features were after the manner of some fighting young man-saint. Mrs. Corlis was reaching for a succinct comparison. What most interested her, however, was the jealousy candidly confessed by the keen gray eyes, and the general disapproval the scornfully noble face had shown.

"So that's her," Gard Brown said to Ruggles. "And you think she is just all right, don't you?"

"I do admire her," replied the reporter sturdily, but without looking up from his desk.

Gard flushed, then laughed a note or two.

"Your aristocrat—I suppose you'd let her walk on you. Condescending notice from a queen is what flatters all you men."

Ruggles bent lower over his paper.

"Don't talk absurdly, Gard," he muttered in displeasure. He began to compute the votes for Permanent Chairman as they were announced.

On the roll-call Cook County near the top cast practically a solid vote for Corlis, all but a minority of the "better element" finding themselves able to support the very respectable candidate of the Machine. The middle counties, especially those of the northern tier, exhibited a decided preference for the Chicago man, but the southern counties lined up solidly for the Governor, while

unexpected votes were recorded for the latter from counties supposed to be " rock-ribbed and copper-bottomed " in the interest of the Senator.

The ballot had not been completed, however, before it became certain that Corlis was the Convention's choice, although by no very superfluous margin. When finally announced, the ballot stood:

For W. H. D. Corlis.....577 votes
For Randolph Ransom.....493 votes
Scattering .....117 votes

The victory was soberly applauded, both by McBride's men and by stalwart conservatives, whose alliance had secured it. The defeat inflicted upon Ransom was not sufficiently substantial to render certain the outcome either in the matter of platform or of the ticket. For Corlis had not received an actual majority of the vote of the Convention. If Chicago had thrown her full strength to him, Egypt had about balanced the preponderance by plumping for Ransom, while the division in the remainder of the state showed that Senator Dawes had hardly held his own; that the constituencies, which once had been his property without reservation, were affected in a measure by the Governor's attraction.

Either such was the case or the game was more intricate than appeared upon the surface. To be sure, it was just possible the hundred odd votes

counted as "scattering," had been fired as blank cartridges, so to speak, on order. Possibly the "combination" did not desire thus early to indicate the full strength they could muster. These were but speculations on the part of some very shrewd observers.

Shadows reached forth from the corners of the hall, and dimness already hung under the high arch of the lofty ceiling. Sunset flung a red blotch of color on the platform, staining with its glow the main actors on that stage.

W. H. D. Corlis bowed with a prolonged grace to the assembly, when Senator Dawes had introduced him as the Permanent Chairman of the Convention. His speech was brief and read from manuscript—itself evidence of how long prepared had been the plan of the "combine." His deep voice, however, possessed no compass—he could not be heard twenty feet away, and he did well to "cut it short."

Nevertheless, he created a most favorable impression. Somehow from the moment he assumed the gavel, matters ran smoothly. His dignity was felt, also his affability. He was smilingly firm, yet he tactfully let the Convention see that he felt himself their servant and that his consideration could be invoked by every man and faction. A convention is like a horse. It responds to the rider who is both gentle and firm-seated.

Mrs. Corlis, watching, thrilled with pride. Her husband's easy domination was a thing of so much fascination—shall it be said, of so much beauty. After all, she thought, echoing his opinion, the democracy recognizes readily in the true aristocrat, when he is presented them, their natural leader.

Gard Brown, in another quarter, likewise seemed fascinated by that figure, the protagonist for the time. Her eyes repeatedly, despite her will, were drawn back to him, and two deep lines cleft her brows. The while her nostrils played at each short intaking and expulsion of her breath—the play that denoted hate or fear.

Ruggles, observing her at intervals and half-displeased still, said sarcastically,

"You seem to like an aristocrat some yourself, Gard. No doubt Mr. Corlis, to women, looks very attractive, doesn't he?"

She shuddered, just perceptibly, and it cost her some slight effort, seemingly, to detach her gaze from Corlis.

"Is evil possibly beautiful?" she asked, as in a daze.

"Evil doers seem to find it so," moralistic Chris responded quite at random.

Gard's cheeks blanched to ashes; but her obtuse companion was leaning forward to catch the developments of the Convention.

XX

ABDICATION

AFTER making up the Committee on Credentials and the Committee on Resolutions, the Convention forthwith adjourned, to meet at ten o'clock the next morning. The Committee on Resolutions was expected to construct the platform overnight and report back to the Convention next day. The platform would enunciate the principles upon which the party would go before the people of the state.

That night, after eleven o'clock, in the inside room of the headquarters of Senator Dawes, a conference was being held. The fact was secret, and to keep it so, Boss McBride had gone upstairs by the kitchen stairs of the hotel, and slipped through the corridors at a moment when they were reported clear of both newspaper men and politicians. Besides McBride, were present the Senator himself, and his son-in-law.

Each of the three was posed in a characteristic attitude. Senator Dawes was seated in a chair before the table, upon which rested his elbow, his head half turned to listen to the others. He looked studious, nervous, sad, half philosopher,

less than half politician. Mr. Corlis stood, his broad back propped against the mantel-piece, a cigar between the first and second fingers of his left hand. He seemed cool, amused, as at a play; he was faultlessly groomed. The Boss, who had come in upon these two, contrasted widely with both the thinker and the man of the world. He was puffing somewhat from his climb, and his black mane was tossed leoninely; the great jaw protruded like the punishing pugilist's of the prize ring. It seemed, indeed, as if the specious cunning and coarse adroitness of the man had for the moment retired, and as if in their place had advanced rough will and the resolve to force matters to his liking.

"Humph, Senator," he declared, "that Ransom's got us where the hair's short—he knows it. He knows we know it, too, and he ain't agoin' to let go."

Senator Dawes looked the inquiry he was too weary to frame.

"What's up?" asked Mr. Corlis tersely.

"The platform committee has just quit. Them fellers from Egypt acted up like mules, Brady says. He just come out, and he ought to know."

"What is their kick?" asked Mr. Corlis with sly malice. "Won't they indorse the Senator for reëlection?"

Hearing, the mouth of the old statesman

opened drily and shut again. What could he retort?

"Worse'n that," rumbled McBride. "Ransom and them Egyptians of his are hell bent for a Silver plank. They won't take nothin' short—they ain't modest, not a bit."

"Well, that was to be expected," commented Mr. Corlis undisturbed. "Don't dispute with them—just quietly vote them down, as we did this afternoon in the Convention."

The Boss looked scornful. He eyed Corlis as a "professional" will a tyro.

"They haven't the majority?" the latter retaliated.

"Nope," snapped the Boss, "but they've got the resolve and that's a damn sight worse to buck. Ransom, he means bizness, that's what I'm tellin' you. He come down flat-footed, damned Brady across the table, and says recognition of Silver has got to go into the platform or he and his friends 'll walk out the Convention."

The Senator got upon his feet and began pacing the room to suppress his agitation.

Mr. Corlis took his time; he cut a new cigar, struck a match, and drew slow puffs of smoke. McBride looked from one man to the other and his heavy face grew more lowering still.

"Well," Mr. Corlis spoke at last, "does he mean it?"

"Mean it!" echoed the Boss wrathfully. "Can I make it plainer? He knows he's got the drop on us, and Ransom ain't the feller to do the sentimental. There never was no let up in him."

Mr. Corlis swung on his heel away from McBride.

"Is money any object with the Governor?" he asked casually.

"They say so, yes—used to be in Springfield," the Boss replied. "But it ain't no good now. Ransom's got his back up, and the crowd that's with him are a lot of fanatic yaps. He's put us in a hole, that's what." McBride looked doleful.

Mr. Corlis took a turn down the room, and, coming back, faced the Boss.

"Then it means we must throw the dog a bone. Anyhow a platform is only so much paper."

Senator Dawes halted in his walk, but he spoke as if to the wall,

"A platform is a declaration of principles."

McBride's face had cleared suddenly.

"I'll tell Brady to go ahead and let them yaps write Silver in big capitals to-morrow mornin', if they want to."

"They will defeat us next fall, if we don't, that's positive," observed Mr. Corlis with deliberation. "It cannot matter materially if the platform does screech bimetalism, provided we elect a

gold governor and the legislature chooses a gold senator."

He smiled, as if the difficulty were quite disposed of.

"The party must be held together, or we can't do business," muttered McBride. "And sayin' a thing ain't always meanin' it, the saints be praised."

He winked jovially at his colleague.

"Well, what do you say, Senator?" asked Mr. Corlis, finally.

The hands of the Senator, folded underneath his black coat-tails, writhed in one another and disturbed the tails. He looked like some possible species of venerable goat caught in the pangs of indigestion. He did not cease to walk.

"Don't ask me," he feebly answered, "I don't know. This Silver craze is a most damnable heresy. But you, not I, are running this Convention —you're responsible. You know how the peepul feel; I've been in Washington too much of the time myself."

Suddenly he felt himself overcome with weakness, and he dropped into a chair. He wanted to go to bed. The hum of the Convention, the contention of tongues, still sounded in his ears, and he was tired too with old age.

Corlis seized the situation.

"I think we'll leave, McBride. The Senator is worn out and he ought to be asleep. Senator,

McBride and I will fix it up, and you can send us word in the morning, if you wish to let us know your decision."

The Boss had caught the signal in his colleague's eyes, and he acquiesced without a word. Senator Dawes was thankful to have them go.

"All right, Walter," he said. "You had better sleep on it and so had I. That's wisest always, when one can."

Left alone, the old man lay back in his chair and the thoughts coursed through his mind like alternating currents. They were harrowing thoughts that harassed his nerves. The lines of care and craft grew deeper about his eyes and mouth.

Despite his worldly experience, the Senator retained much of the theological mode of thinking in which he had been nurtured. Thus, what he styled his temptation, he realized was now upon him. He was unable to escape this conviction, for all the power of sophistry in which he was so greatly exercised by a lifetime of political dissimulation and special pleading.

It was his temptation, because it threatened the bed-rock principles of his political philosophy and faith—the principles upon which his career was based; those he had preached to two generations of Americans; those he believed had been sanctified by the Revolutionary fathers.

He understood human nature, and he was neither an idealist nor a doctrinaire. He knew how to shift and change; how to use men and to abandon them; how to shape opinion, and to twist prejudice and wrong-headedness to the advancement of good government and sound policy. The arts of the demagogue were much at his command as well as the practice of management; he was an old hand at the distribution of offices and an adept as a maker of promises that time by itself must nullify.

Nevertheless, Senator Dawes was not a demagogue. Means he might be tolerant concerning; about ends he had remained inflexible. Fundamentally, the man was patriotic, a thinker and a searcher after truth. His youth had been fashioned in the fires of the great patriotic outburst which saved the Union, and the spirit of that time still survived in him. He was a lover of the people still and a republican who fervently believed in the efficacy of his country's institutions and their mission of liberty in the world.

He likewise was an office-holder. The Senate was his life. He believed he rendered the Republic service there; but he loved the chamber for itself, loved the work, the associations, the great traditions, the final power of the American House of Lords. He wished to die in harness, to be to the end a Senator of the United States.

For with what could he fill his life, were he to fail of a return for the sixth time? The vacuity that threatened, tormented him incessantly, allowed not his mind the consideration of his principles, intruded when he endeavored to realize the enormity of Silver and of what he was convinced must work evil to the nation. He found no consolation in the phrase "honorable retirement:" it, to him, but signified poignant desolation. He knew the world, how men treated a man whose success was ended, a man relegated to the "scrap-heap." He had sympathy for old Prince Bismarck, growling in the woods alone, after the Kaiser had turned him off.

The Senator went to bed. He could postpone until morning the intolerable review of pro and con; sleep might suggest the solution. His head once on the pillow, the brain raced more swiftly than before. He was like a man about to drown, to whom, in a flash, his whole life appears. Even in the darkness he felt he could perceive the bare walls of the hotel room and each ugly piece of furniture, while the grinding rumble of Chicago's streets sounded as Niagara to his ears.

Perhaps no man living was competent to instruct Senator Dawes in the political conditions of the Republic. He had been a life-long student of her institutions and had learned what her people were; had kept year after year in touch with them, knew

their heart and mind and temper. Also he knew the changes that had been wrought in them and all that such implied. This vast and intricate knowledge mastered him; he was its victim. Now, as he lay outstretched, vainly seeking the light sleep of old age, this knowledge forced itself upon him, did not permit him to delude himself.

Had it been as in the old days, when, as he remembered, government was carried on by discussion, he could have braved the issue, stuck to righteous words and gone upon the stump and fought his enemies before the people's eyes. His weapons then had been those of logic, supplemented by appeals to the people's conscience. He had required, then, neither lies nor dissimulations, nor money, nor machines. Right reason and righteous motives, they had sufficed alone to shake the old State of Illinois to its center.

But now! Where were those freemen—God-fearing, practical, and cool reasoning men—who asked for themselves but honest toil and civic liberty, and demanded only of the government they set up, seemly order and decent justice? He knew that old constituency had perished, or was submerged. There were classes, races, divisions now. There were great blocks of voters who would flout at argument; others, whose prejudices must be studied; some, who asked for money or

for "jobs;" others, still, who only through a disciplined organization could be reached.

A vision of Chicago rose in his mind—Chicago, the new fact in Illinois, the metropolitan city, the congeries of diverse aliens—Chicago, vast, turbulent, ugly, unclean, but with what force, what life, what passion, the heart of all the West, the young giantess who forestalled the future, who gathered in herself the converging lines of the continent, as a belly holds the reins.

Chicago dominated him. Her he did not understand, nor on what terms to deal with her. Her barbarian standards staggered him and reduced the sure wisdom that he had to foolishness. In her presence he grew conscious of what a fool he was to introduce into the problem principles of honor and of conduct appropriate only to conditions now obsolete. He might go upon the stump this summer and reason as Douglas reasoned, as Lincoln reasoned. Forsooth, would Chicago and the new spirit hearken?

Nay, were he himself not a man of the past, not himself hopelessly obsolete, he must march abreast of the times and forbear disparagement. The men of the day were such men as his son-in-law and the Irish Boss. He must conform, agree with their views, adopt their methods, follow them.

Ay, follow! The verb revealed the truth—he

had lost his leadership; the younger men were chiefs.

Leader and chief, the contrasted words included all the change. Leaders of opinion were passing out of fashion; chiefs of organization and managers of campaigns had superseded them.

Possessed of this bitter conviction, the Senator finally fell asleep. It was then close to dawn, and the old man did not consciously awaken until nearly nine o'clock. His first thought was of the committee and of the necessity for doing something quickly. But, as he drew his garments over his chilly limbs, resolution ebbed from him.

What for? his vague mind asked. Why attempt to influence, where influence was defunct? Once he had guided the current, now the current directed him. Let it. He was no Don Quixote to insist upon riding an impossible tournament. The committee was not his business; the platform they would lay down was for Illinois, it would possess no meaning at Washington. His own principles were known, nor could they be amended by what a State Convention might resolve. If Corlis and McBride felt the need of a Silver plank in order to elect their man governor, he was not concerned. He was interested only in remaining Senator at Washington, where after election he would stand and vote as he had in the past,

according to what he believed to be sound statesmanship.

Senator Dawes, yielding to indisposition, remained in his room the entire morning, talking with the few who called to see him. The hour for the reassembling of the Convention had long passed, yet no messenger from Corlis or McBride had appeared to learn what Senator Dawes had concluded, overnight, about the platform.

In fact, the Senator did not reach the Convention hall until after two o'clock in the afternoon.

The platform had been reported at the morning session, and no one, in the absence of Senator Dawes, had been found to protest against the Silver plank, or to advocate the substitution of a sound money declaration.

The platform, as reported by the committee, had been adopted without discussion; Governor Ransom had read it through with smooth perfunctoriness, and Chairman Corlis, with a stroke of his gavel, had declared it " moved and seconded and adopted." Smiling and adroit he had put the question and settled the whole matter before any delegate had a chance to say so much as Jack Robinson. A few strenuous " silk-stocking reformers " yelled protests, when it was too late, but Mr. Corlis could not see their signals nor hear their vociferations. Presently the Convention howled, in unanimity, " Sit down, sit down! "

Moral principle, like a farthing candle, was snuffed out.

The Senator demurely sought his seat in the big leather chair reserved for him at the right of the Chairman, a little back. A note soon came to him from his daughter, a note of congratulations upon the resolution, embodied in the platform, declaring him the party's choice for election to the United States Senate by the next legislature.

XXI

THE GOVERNOR

HE is the man, the best of them I've seen here," observed J. J. J. to his niece.

Governor Ransom was presenting the platform to the Convention.

"You said, didn't you, Vicky," the magnate resumed some five minutes later, "that you used to know him years ago?"

"Very well indeed," said Mrs. Corlis in confirmation. "I knew him from the time I was twelve years old until I was married. You must have heard about him from us a great many times, if you remember, Uncle Johnny. He was ten years older than I and the first grown-up friend I ever had. But I have not seen him for years now."

"I should say," concluded the money-master, as he removed his eyes from the figure of the Governor, "I should say your old friend, Vicky, was a born leader of men—he is, or I miss my guess. Couldn't well help being it, if he tried. I wonder what he means by wasting such abilities."

"You mean his championship of Silver?" in-

quired Mrs. Corlis. "It is strange. But Chris Ruggles, the *Pundit* reporter I introduced to you yesterday, has been down to Egypt within the last three months for his paper, and he says the sentiment down there is simply indescribably strong. In his opinion, if Governor Ransom wished to retain any part of his ascendency in southern Illinois, he had no choice but to go with the tide."

J. J. J. nodded.

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," he muttered.

Presently:

"A peculiar man, Vicky, I can see that. Now, I can see in your friend most of the qualifications for real leadership; he has will and courage in abundant measure, also imagination and sufficient flexibility. Then, they say, he is an orator and the cutest practical politician in the state. Why does he want to spoil his chances by attaching himself to a lost cause; for that's what Silver will amount to, and no more."

"Perhaps, Uncle Johnny, Governor Ransom would not agree with you that Silver is a lost cause," suggested Mrs. Corlis, suddenly unwilling to concede the certainty as against her former friend.

"But it can't be anything else." J. J. J. was positive. "Retrogressive movements, reactions, however violent for the time, are doomed always to end in one way. The ultimate defeat of this

Silver lunacy is just as certain as that to-morrow's sun will rise."

Again she was surprised by her own irritation. She resented it that her uncle should dismiss so high-handedly the possibility of success for what the Governor represented.

"He may not think so, Uncle Johnny," she said, combatively. "Chris, who has been investigating, believes the movement will shake the country to the center; he contends that the delegates from Egypt, whom Mr. McBride's henchmen call "hayseed farmer yaps," are a new set in politics. They have turned out the old political gang, who were in politics for the spoils, and they head a new democratic movement which will redeem politics and will renew the old-time American life."

"Humph!" ejaculated J. J. J. Yet it was neither a contemptuous nor a disbelieving humph; it simply registered the fact that he was impressed, that he recognized he had encountered a new force, which, perhaps, would require attention.

For J. J. J. did not deal with theories or form any dogmatic conceptions of how things, from the point of view of a capitalist, ought to be: he considered forces and respected all of them; he estimated the strength of each and did not waste his time condemning or approving any. His mind, in short, possessed the impersonality of greatness.

How different from his was the attitude of his niece. She throbbed with enthusiasms and thrilled with sympathies; she even had difficulty, as she recognized herself, to prevent her prejudice from running away with her judgment. Chris Ruggles yesterday, to show her of what stuff the new men from Egypt were made, had escorted her to the far side of the hall, where from an advantageous gallery he had bidden her look down and study the revolutionists.

She recalled now what they had seemed to her; moreover, the original impression had been deepened by the reflections of a restless night. Those men were not politicians, at least of any of the breeds with which she was acquainted; they were obviously neither place-hunters nor money-seekers. In political parlance, and Mrs. Corlis did not shrink from employment of the term, they were not "trough-feeders." They were not even men of craft, who played the game for the excitement's sake and relished human nature in the red, raw state. They were none of these.

They were dreamers, rather, good hearts, simple folk, who on their farms had felt the rapture of a new humanitarian cause, and had hungered and thirsted after righteousness in government and law, as their Cromwellian and Methodistic forebears had yearned and suffered in the cause of the new ideals of their several days.

Yesterday, looking down at them, the involuntary tears had started in her eyes. One half of her nature or inheritance, the Puritan, the moral, understood those men and sympathized with their dreams. She had said to herself—it was spontaneous—of such as these had Lincoln come, and, as they were, such had been her father in his youth. Between them—the comparison in her own mind was instant—and the captains of industry in Chicago whom she knew, what a gulf yawned.—Was it Progress, could it be called such, she questioned, which maintained and was widening that gulf?

Who were nobler, those men of riches in the cities with their loose morals, their cynical contempts, their conception of the world as an exchange to make profits in and as a mart to buy sensual luxuries in, or those country lawyers and unpolished yeomen, morally austere, who cherished in this corrupt day the ethical ideals of the high Anglo-Saxon race, and who were animated now by a vision of Justice enthroned and human brotherhood become an institution? Mrs. Corlis poignantly suspected in her soul that the dream of these men might be the authentic modern version of the ideal of Saint Augustine's *Civitas Dei,* the City of God.

Under this impulsion she renewed her opposition to her uncle.

" May it not prove, Uncle Johnny, that the in-

tensity of the movement may spread it throughout the nation and that by it the old parties will be submerged or reformed? Is it not just that probability which Governor Ransom perceives? He fancies that if now he embarks upon the wave, it may lift him aloft into national power and reputation."

"But, Vicky, all the movement has behind it is enthusiasm and belief."

J. J. J. was kind to her feminine credulity, but he felt it better not to mince matters.

"Napoleon said, remember, God is on the side of the heavy battalions, and that's safe to bank on. Besides, Vicky, this Governor of yours ain't one bit fooled—he ain't that kind. To get down to brass tacks, I guess pure cussedness made him pick the forlorn hope; it's what suits his nerves."

The probability, if not the truth, of this surmise, silenced Mrs. Corlis. Yet her secret mind protested against what she felt were the capitalistic assumptions of her uncle's point of view.

Both were presently engaged in watching the Convention, Mrs. Corlis with the appearance of alertness yet with eyes that dreamed, J. J. J. with the aspect of a drowsy mystic, but beholding men and things exactly as they were.

Mr. Jarrett's speculation concerning the Governor's determining motive, goes far to explain

Randolph Ransom and the notorious contradictions of his career.

He was now concluding his second term as Governor of Illinois, and as executive of the state had enjoyed nearly eight years of sway. He had always been "in politics" from his earliest manhood, and he was now turning his fiftieth year. Politics, in truth, was more than his pursuit; he had made it a profession, studying it prodigiously as other men may study engineering. And he had mastered the practice of politics, as a naval captain does his ship or a gambler his cards.

Ransom had begun life ostensibly as a country lawyer, but had scarcely commenced before he had abandoned even the pretense of keeping a law office. First he had been chosen sheriff of his county, then state senator for many terms, then lieutenant-governor, finally governor, and governor a second time. Originally a protégé of Senator Dawes, afterwards his confidential man, he became the latter's lieutenant and manager. Those who knew affirmed that "Uncle Simeon" owed one of his reëlections to the Senate, probably two, entirely to the friendship of Randolph Ransom.

The man somehow, from the outset, won the bitter antagonism of "the better element," the ultra-respectability of his party. His name became a by-word on the lips and his success a stench in the nostrils of the "silk-stocking" faction in

Chicago. " Reformers " anathematized him; Chicago newspapers villified him; he was the builder of the most powerful state machine ever constructed in Illinois, and he had a hearty loathing for " literary fellers " and " civil-service cranks." Early and always he was distinguished as a hard hater and a hard hitter, too; he never compromised or ceased hammering an enemy's head. In fine, he was a man who enjoyed a superfluity of friends and foes, since all men were one or the other.

How his true friends loved Randolph Ransom! How his followers " stuck," through thick and thin, sun and shine, tempest or earthquake! The whole of Egypt worshiped him and he furthered Egypt's interests, fought for Egypt's prejudices, got offices for Egypt's leaders. The men of Egypt were his feudatories and he their Henry of Navarre, their captain of a hundred fights. He was not better than were they; he could out-swear them, out-drink them, beat them at poker, and out-argue the longest-winded farmer that sat on a barrel anywhere between the three rivers. Nor did his following stop at Egypt; the man won devoted friends wherever he was known. Indeed, it was estimated that Ransom's personal strength in Illinois was what Stephen A. Douglas' had been or John A. Logan's.

Yet this practical politician, this tobacco-squirt-

ing demagogue, this rough-and-tumble darling of the masses, was a gentleman born, in the strictest Southern sense. He came of blue-grass Kentucky stock. His father had been a "colonel" before the war, and his mother was a gentlewoman. The marks of lineage were unmistakable in his face; his traditions were inevitably reflected in his manner, though he would fain have escaped them utterly, though he had lived like a "rounder" and a Democrat of Democrats religiously the most of his days.

He was notoriously indifferent to women. His intimates averred that he had never uttered a word in dispraise of the sex or a word in their praise, either. Women seemed not to be in his thoughts; he displayed no active aversion to them, but that they had been banished from his mind was manifest.

The attitude of the Governor during the past winter had not been wholly understood. He had let his friends know he would not accept the nomination for a third term as governor, even if he could get it. Moreover, he had announced that he would not contest the United States Senatorship with Simeon E. Dawes. He did declare, notwithstanding, that his views on public matters had so widely departed from those professed by Senator Dawes, that he found himself unable actively to support the latter for reëlection. But,

on the other hand, he stated positively that he could not think of opposing so old and so intimate a friend, one, too, who deserved so well of Illinois.

Governor Ransom's partiality for Silver and Bimetallism had been evinced at least as far back as two years ago. In truth, never at any time in his career could he have been counted as reliably a Sound Money man. Consequently, when the storm burst in southern Illinois, it was to be expected the Governor would not constitute himself an emergency lightning rod to draw its ire for the benefit of others threatened by the vengeance. He had waited on developments, and at the proper moment had stepped in front of the movement and assumed the baton of leadership.

His accession was acclaimed, since there was need of leadership. He supplied edge to the movement's sword, point to its arrow; his adroitness oiled the crude machinery of fanaticism.

In the session of the committee which constructed the platform, adopted subsequently by the Convention, Governor Ransom displayed no least rancor against Senator Dawes. He declared that he stood for a principle and entertained no animosity against persons; that he was, as always, a Republican, but that he was interested to preserve the Republican party as the party of the people.

He did not want the earth, he said, his dearest

desire being to persuade everybody "to get together." Accordingly, and in promotion of party harmony, he was prepared to barter a senatorship for a platform-plank.

"You want 'Uncle Simeon' endorsed; I want Bimetallism approved; that's easy." Such was his refrain.

Finally, under the pressure of a threat to "bolt," he wrought the committee to his will. His plan "to promote harmony" was accepted by the Convention; Senator Dawes was declared the party's choice for Senator and recommended to the next legislature, Bimetallism was commended and Free Silver declared an article of the Republican creed.

Thus Governor Ransom had apparently succeeded in his purpose of committing the party in Illinois to Silver. Apparently he had won his battle. He was observed to smile with satisfaction, as he read the resolution endorsing Senator Dawes.

XXII

THE DAWES-McBRIDE-CORLIS COMBINATION

THE report of the Committee on Resolutions having been adopted as the platform by the Convention, the business next in order was the selection of candidates to constitute the party ticket.

It was half past four o'clock when Chairman Corlis declared nominations for governor to be in order, and directed that the roll of counties be called, in order that each county might have opportunity to present a name, should it so choose to exercise its privilege.

No intimation up to this time, emanating from an authoritative source, indicated that the ruling powers had united upon any one man for the honor of the nomination; indeed, so far it was not demonstrated that any "combine" whatsoever, if such existed, could control an actual majority of the Convention. Therefore, experienced political forecasters expected that "The Big Three," if there were such a trinity, would be chary about exposing the full strength of their hands at first, and, most likely, would proceed to test the sentiment of the delegates and to disclose the divisions

of the Convention in advance, by bringing forward tentative candidates.

The upshot confirmed the suspicion. When Cook County was called, alphabetically among the first, Alderman Thomas Patrick Casey of Chicago put in nomination the name of State Senator McDonnell McGruder, while the "Reform Rump," by the voice of Arthur Hillis Collar, presented the name of Judge Leonard R. Russell. Ohio County from away down in Egypt nominated Cyrus Haskins, and a Dawes man from Sangamon named James B. Steuben of Will County.

The first ballot with the names of four gentlemen in nomination, resulted as follows:

McGruder of Cook County....397 votes
Russell of Cook County.....214 votes
Haskins of Ohio County .....411 votes
Steuben of Will County.....253 votes
Scattering .....113 votes.

The total vote of the Convention, when cast, was 1388. A majority of one was 695 votes. In other words, to nominate would require some 700 votes.

A most cursory analysis of the first ballot showed McBride's Machine confronted by a solid Egypt. But the vote for Steuben of Will, it was remarked, represented what strength Senator Dawes could swing at a word, namely, about 250 votes, while equally it was proved that Ransom as candidate

for chairman could draw more largely upon the Dawes following than any lieutenant of his could hope to do. Therefore it was safe to infer that 411 votes cast for Haskins of Ohio, constituted the maximum of the Free Silver strength, since its candidate could not expect to acquire a single vote from the two hundred odd "reformers" of Cook County, and since, even if all the 113 votes registered as "scattering" could be delivered in a lump, the Silver representative, notwithstanding, would still fall short of attaining a majority by some 175 votes. Moreover, it was probable, if any one owned them, the scattering 113 were not the property of the Silver leaders.

The second ballot showed no appreciable change.

The third ballot stood as follows:

McGruder of Cook County.....522 votes
Russell of Cook County.....212 votes
Haskins of Ohio County.....438 votes
Steuben of Will County.....130 votes
Scattering .....86 votes.

The result clearly indicated that about one half of the Dawes men had "flopped" to the Chicago Machine, while a few scattering votes had "flocked" to Egypt.

What now impended? Was this the commencement of a "landslide" to the Cook County candidate? Uneasiness permeated the Convention.

The "Reformers" of Chicago were seized with a mild consternation. They had desired "to administer a Waterloo" to the "Free Silver lunacy;" but now they asked themselves, with trepidation, must they, in order to rebuke the deep sea of repudiation, swallow the devil of a Boss and all his works? Was their choice to be confined to Scylla and Charybdis; must they either compromise with the "corrupt Ransom" or strike hands with the "notorious McBride?" Probably most of the politicians of all factions were "tickled to death" to behold the dilemma presented the fastidious "gentlemen and reformers."

Happily the fourth ballot relieved, at least momentarily, the apprehension of the "reformers." It stood:

McGruder of Cook County ....100 votes
Russell of Cook County.....143 votes
Haskins of Ohio County.....442 votes
Steuben of Will County.....621 votes.

The galleries craned their necks and buzzed with the sense of crisis. The whole Convention gave vent to a mighty gasp, when the secretary finished reading the result. One thing was palpable: the "combine" between the Senator and the Chicago Boss had been doubly demonstrated; its ascendency was proclaimed; its compulsion rested on men like a perception. McBride and "Uncle Simeon" swung their strength now this

way and now that, as the giants of finance take the weight of their fingers off and put it on the stocks again. The " combine " would name the nominee.

A hum like that of innumerable bees filled the hall—it was the hoarse whispering of a thousand men. Some were frantic and rushed here and there, swinging arms and shouting words.

Six hundred and twenty-one votes for Steuben, Dawes' friend, a respectable mediocrity, honest and dense! Surely another ballot must nominate him! Already it was clear that the " Reformers " would plump for him in preference to Haskins or McGruder, while McBride had still in hand a reserve of one hundred solid votes to throw to him, more than sufficient to nominate.

" The band wagon," was the phrase on nearly everybody's lips. " Get into it, or you'll get left," the comment. " Now or never," the alternative. The Convention, like a cat, was crouching, gathering to spring.

Suddenly the electric lights thrilled into life and diffused a ghastly pallor over the excited men. Hysteria and that assembly offered each other their embrace.

Hysteria was a word not at home in the vocabulary of McBride. What he plotted for was the creation of a " stampede," a panic of enthusiasm in men as uncontrollable as the panic of fear

in cattle. The shifting of the vote, to McGruder first, then plus an increment to Steuben, had destroyed the poise of the Convention, had annihilated its faith in itself. McBride, to use his own vernacular, "had it rattled." Delegates felt themselves mere reeds, expectant of the coming tempest, ready to bow north or south or east or west at its behest; they perceived the handwriting on the wall and waited for the scourge to come.

McBride sat in the first seat of the first row, at the head of his delegation. The platform half hid him underneath its front. He sat with his great shoulders hunched, stupid stolidity in his face, his oblivious eyes half closed. Yet he was sharply wakeful in his every sense.

He, who knew so well how to coerce or to persuade individual men, was possessed also of the instinct for moving men en masse. He was awaiting what more pedantic people would have styled the psychological moment.

Arthur Hillis Collar arose in his seat far back of McBride to withdraw the name of Judge Russell, adding,

"Judge Russell's friends will be unanimously for that man of the plain people, James B. Steuben, of Will County."

"The Black Boss" roused himself; he lifted his head heavily from its niche in his neck.

"Damn him, I'll fool him!" he muttered in a wrathful undertone. And he crooked a stubby finger over his shoulder; then resumed his look at the floor.

A great bulk rolled up to the Boss.

"Get up there, Brady, and let 'er go!"

The big State Senator shouldered his way through the press and mounted to the platform. A moment, and his towering girth of head and neck and chest appeared at the front. The delegates took note; the shrill buzz hushed. Brady was the storm-bird of the Cook County Machine: where his batteries of speech unlimbered, it was to fire plunging shot and shrieking shell.

While Brady was acquiring the Chairman's recognition, McBride had gone around to the rear of the platform and so gained its level. Mrs. Corlis saw him stepping across behind the screen of men, at the platform's front. At her father's chair he stood still, his hand upon its back.

Senator Brady opened his great throat. But he made no speech; he roared a sentence:

"Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen of the Convention, Cook County withdraws the name of McDonnell McGruder and nominates for the head of the ticket Walter H. D. Corlis of Chicago!"

The speaker dropped from sight like a Jack shut in his box. In his stead appeared to the eyes of the astounded assembly what his burly form

had masked, a figure elegant and at ease, a smile, half deprecatory, half humorous, on his handsome face, in his hand the gavel raised to signal an entreaty for order.

In a burst the delegates realized that the nominee would be their Chairman.

Then fell a sound like that of cataracts released. Cook County was on its feet cheering, was on its chairs. The " whoops " were " let loose " in series, got tangled up, rose to the ceiling in a vortex of clamor. The galleries howled, bringing their shoes into play, so that sheets of dust went up like smoke from the pounded boards. The henchmen of McBride flung up fourteen dollar silk hats and battered them with their fists when they came tumbling down. They climbed upon one another's shoulders, waving banners, standards, umbrellas, handkerchiefs. They stripped their coats off and waved them and their shirt-sleeved arms together.

" Stampede, stampede! "—" W. H. D. Corlis, Corlis! " swelled the cry.

The pandemonium was contagious, both in its enthusiasm and its farce. For, as is only possible in America, the excitement was at once hysterical and calculated, men going wild, yet each " keeping his eye peeled."

McBride leaned over the back of the chair which held Senator Dawes.

" How do you size it up, Senator? " said he.

The old man turned his head, a strange smile, ironical yet propitiatory, curving his shaven lip.

"I guess it'll have to do," was all he said.

"Then, by God, it's now or never," swore the Boss. "Suppose we ought to show ourselves, oughtn't we? Your fellers need an example set 'em, Senator."

"Uncle Simeon" got limply to his feet. Mrs. Corlis read his back.

McBride pushed a path through the struggling wall about the Chairman.

"Stand back, damn you, stand back!" he ordered with the brusqueness of a cavalry brigadier. "Senator Dawes has got to get in front."

To see the better, Mrs. Corlis, like everybody else at this crucial moment, stood upon her chair.

McBride with Senator Dawes had broken through. The Boss now stood upon the right hand of the Chairman; the Senator stood upon his left. Each put an arm out, resting a hand on a shoulder of Mr. Corlis. And thus the Triumvirate confronted the Convention.

"Warm work," remarked the Chairman coolly to his colleagues.

"It'll work dead easy," declared McBride.

"It's an ovation," observed the Senator.

The Convention had gone crazy.

XXIII

"MAGNIFICENT, BUT NOT WAR"

THEN it was that a ludicrous incident occurred, such that the thousand delegates, pulling up in their enthusiasm for a minute, howled for the pure humor of the thing.

The Triumvirate had been augmented to a Quartette. The three mastiffs had been joined by a spaniel. The latter had wedged himself unexpectedly between long "Uncle Simeon" Dawes and the elegant Corlis. He was small, white-haired, pink skinned, and he lifted up his hand to the Chairman's broad chest; he could not reach higher. But the action signified, since no voice could pierce that pandemonium, that the two hundred odd votes of the "gentlemen and scholars" were at Corlis' disposal.

Irrepressible smiles spread over the countenances of the Senator and the Boss. The delegates translated those smiles into shrieks of laughter and deafening, ironical yells and cat-calls. The Chairman alone did not share the mirth; he took the reformer's hand and seemed to thank him. The self-important creature smiled and, turning to the delegates, bowed his rapturous appreciation

of their vociferous appreciation. The action crowned the farce; it upset entirely the American sense of humor. The Convention screamed; they slapped one another on the back and doubled up in fits.

The unconscious subject and occasion of their hilarity continued smiling, obviously pleased with the opportunity of exhibiting his good breeding to a majority who had it not. He retired finally, blushing like a school-boy who has taken a prize.

He was Arthur Hillis Collar, idealist, purist, gentleman, but no humorist or sympathizer with human nature. He knew largely how it ought to be; insufficiently how it is. He led a movement every year in Chicago against "the dominance of a vulgar Boss," and every other year in the state against "the methods of a corrupt Machine." But he was not proof against the seductions of Respectability, and next day, in an interview, remarked that "the better element had forced the nomination of a respectable citizen upon the reluctant politicians."

The joke was finishing, and the delegates were preparing to renew their fervor and their demonstration, to complete the stampede, in short, when a man struggled through the human tangle on the platform, twisting, crawling, lunging desperately his way, behind him, helping to confirm the open-

ing with his elbows and shoulders, a strapping farmer-boy.

He emerged upon the platform's edge, over which his toes projected. The farmer at his back pushed and shoved until a small half ring was formed with space to turn in.

The man sprang erect and flung up long arms at the Convention; it was a frantic appeal to be heard in the face of a wall of sound. He turned head and arm toward the Chairman and imperatively demanded recognition. He was Governor Ransom.

Corlis bent to the Boss, who emphatically shook his head. The Chairman turned to the Senator, who nodded gravely. Thereupon the Chairman threw up an open left hand and swung his gavel with his right. All the howling assembly saw that he had disregarded McBride's advice. Their curiosity was lit.

Dramatic possibilities impended; to allow them way the uproar died down somewhat; the galleries paused. Corlis waved a hand at Ransom and with a smile took advantage of the moment to ask by gesture the indulgence of the Convention for his enemy.

It had a generous semblance, and the assembly liked the chivalry; it was an appeal for fair play for his arch foe. There are arts, subtler than elo-

quence, whereby the humor of a political convention may be pleased.

McBride dinned in Corlis' ear,

"It's a damn long chance you're takin'. Mind you, it ain't easy to set 'em off again."

The Chairman from his height cried back,

"Teach you a trick this time, McBride; I know what I'm doing."

"Faith, I hope so," growled the Boss; "you're the only one what does."

Corlis soothed the murmur of the Convention with outspread palms. Then he withdrew a foot and bowed to Ransom, as if to say,

"I've hushed the flood for you; now embark on it, if you dare."

Ransom sprang at the opportunity; he did not wait to so much as recognize his magnanimous rival. Mrs. Corlis made a mental note.

Stillness reigned; men held their breath until the Governor should begin.

"You dare not, you dare not, Republicans of Illinois," he shrilled, "nominate this plutocrat and money-master upon a platform explicitly bimetallic and in spirit democratic!"

His voice mounted with every word, until he flung the challenge forth in such a clarion pitch that it pierced the dullest ear and carried to the farthest wall.

He paused to let it carry. Tall, slim, erect, he

stood, meriting his sobriquet of the "Egyptian Palm." The compact head, its high temples bare, was a little thrown back, the dark eyes beneath the low broad forehead flaming like live coals. The face was thin with passion, coarseness and the stains of dissipation quite burned out in the intense fire of the crisis, leaving the features pure in their original classicism, in the dignity of their antique Roman mould.

He framed his declaration to another text and hung it high for all to see. He insulted their dissent so strenuously that amazement held them rigid with the instantaneous wish to learn how far audacity might carry him. Picturesque and grandiose, his championship of a forlorn hope, his defiance of a huge majority, caught his hearers' fancy. In that city of the enemy he had subdued delegates and galleries alike to attention.

It had fared ill then with any hardy fool who had interposed his howl. Ransom had won his hearing.

He felt he had, and instantly he changed his method. He abandoned challenge and adopted logic. His swift words—he was the most rapid speaker in the state—flew forth distinct as notes carried from a resonant bell, but barbed like bullets from a rifle's barrel.

He showed the contradiction; he proved the disparity; he compared the platform with the can-

didate. And after demonstration, to supply an eating acid to his logic, he let loose scorn and fury, vituperation and what seemed the bottled hatred of a lifetime. He peeled his living victim before the eyes of the Convention, as a boy peels a willow wand. The while his victim, bland and cool, with no least sign of perturbation or of anger on his handsome face, stood with gavel in his hand, ready to rebuke any interruption to the speaker.

Ransom was closing his short speech.—This was the cheat, he said, which Boss and Magnate had combined to foist upon honest men with an honest cause—a cheat of words. The platform was a lie, it was a mockery, condemned as such by debasing it into a footstool and a pedestal for a candidate who belied its principles and despised its framers. True men, men possessed of an honest faith, were to be drugged into acquiescence by the opium of false pretenses while attired in the stolen livery of the people; a corporation candidate, who had fattened on corporation plunder all his life, conspired to sneak into the governor's chair, there to coin into commercial gold the people's hopes, the people's rights.

And these were his last words:

"Nominate this man and you perjure yourselves, you stultify your platform. Nominate him and you will lose in November. Thereby you will proclaim your belief that the people are fools, that

you can offer them bread in a platform and palm off a stone for a candidate. I am a life-long Republican and I have participated in the deliberations of this Convention; therefore, I cannot with grace walk out of this hall. But dare any man of you tell me I can with consistency vote next November for this bilingual product of your august deliberations—a platform of silver and a nominee all gold!"

He finished. The Convention sat stunned; the brilliancy had been that of too vivid lightning.

Before Egypt even recovered sufficiently to cheer her champion, Chairman Corlis, with superb composure and fascinating smile, inquired what the pleasure of the Convention might be. Cæsar, courting the crowd, had not more pleasing accommodation; condescension became Corlis.

Egypt saw she was outgeneraled; she roared too late.

"Vote, vote, vote!" came like timed volleys from the trained ranks of McBride.—"Vote, vote, vote!" the refrain was taken up. It spread; it submerged the Egyptian clamor. It was imperious, not to be denied.

Temper had changed. Before the speech, the Convention had been white-hot; now it was steely cold. Ransom had persuaded no one; his imprecations had but crystallized the majority's determination. His declaration was magnificent, but

it was not politics. Probably he had despaired of politics, and so had resolved to make it war.

The delegates could now be counted to do the work relentlessly.

At least, that seemed McBride's judgment, when Corlis consulted him.

"Can they be depended on?"

"Yep, let 'em take the bit. That yap has made 'em tired. They want to get down to bizness. It's dead safe."

XXIV

HER HERO

A WOMAN, spectator of the struggle between men, may, so she have mind, attain something of the impartiality of the artist. Masculine egoism, at least, does not stigmatize her vision. Besides, to woman the game seems always worth the candle. What to man is a sordid or a farcical contention, ever appears to her melodramatic fancy a fine and heroic piece.

So with Mrs. Corlis. Driving homewards in the gathering darkness, with J. J. J. at her side, her imagination was still alight with scenes from the Convention—a tumult of impressions, a panorama of animated episodes, varied by a few grand pictures of the whole hall and crowd.

Her mind recreated, spontaneously, incessantly. It restored that boisterous lake of men, ringed by the clamorous galleries; and in the midst the platform, a low island beaten with the assaulting surf of the "stampede." The electric glare, the pallid faces, the unleashed passions, the will, the madness—all the contrasted colors and furious aspects of that half-hour's scene were vividly recast. Again she saw that straight, defiant figure; again

she felt the sudden silence he evoked; again she heard the winged words that flew and stung and challenged. And the thrill flashed through her once again, the exultant thrill that follows the witnessing of a strong deed, of a deed of genius.—One man, by sheer force of passion, had awed ten thousand; one man had held a mob as a fearless hunter might hold a snarling wolf—by the ears. One man had told his assembled enemies the unwelcome truth.

Still shone for her that lonely figure, about whose form her fancy, from the high romance of forlorn hopes and fables of defeated champions, wove gleams and splendors.

But there intruded a new picture and shunted the old down to forgetfulness; so success ousts failure. The new picture—a climbing peak of acclaiming men, a quivering pyramid of flags and standards and shaken hats, an unquenchable roar and miraculous commotion, and at the top, the summit and the crown of it, a figure lifted up, a Cæsarean head, a pale countenance, smiling, imperturbable! Above a tempest of human intemperance, this one face of cool comprehension and invincible poise! To his wife incontestably his was the eminence of the demigod.

J. J. J. disturbed the circuit of her thoughts.

"What did you think of the hullabaloo,

Vicky?" His tone was irreverent. "Appeared to me something like a backyard cat concert."

"Oh, Uncle Johnny, you are such a depreciator."

"Humph, you get to be when you are acquainted with the inside, the inside of anything. The wheels behind ain't gilded up like the clock face before."

"But illusions—even they are something."

"They are ignorance," he declared, but not unkindly.

"I know just how you feel. You're making heroes, Vicky, that's what you're doing. You had better talk to me instead. Your Uncle Johnny may be plain, but he'll never disappoint you, depend on that."

Mrs. Corlis understood, but she disregarded what he implied.

"Oh, I would not have missed it for the world; I think it was simply great!" she cried, like a young girl.

"Great dust, great noise, many people. Not great men. The sentiment and claptrap was all rigged up beforehand, planned in some hotel or saloon by fat-stomached Irishmen and others who spit on the floor."

"I'll not hear it, Uncle Johnny, I will not! I prefer to be fooled."

Mr. Jarrett said no more upon that theme.

But he watched her solicitously through the dinner they ate alone together, and afterwards he sat silently with her, while she pretended to read.

She hardly pretended, but let the book fall upon her lap and stared with large eyes above it. She had given orders that she was not at home to any one that night; for her nerves had been tried sufficiently that day, and she wished to think and feel.

Presently, however, telegrams began pouring in, congratulations for her husband, some for herself. They were messages from her friends in Washington, in New York, at Newport. She tired of reading them very soon, and directed that they be left to accumulate until next morning.

She was thinking, thrilling. She was a little self-condemnatory, but chiefly very happy.

She felt she understood now, as she never had before, how what he styled her Puritanism irritated him. Truly, it was her provinciality which had been at fault, and not the perversities of his nature. That afternoon's revelation of his greatness altered the standards she used to judge. She understood him now; and all these years she had been girding at a Lorenzo de Medici in vain dissatisfaction because he was not, forsooth, a middle-class gentleman. What she had required was impossible; what she expected him to be, a paradox. A man cannot succeed Napoleonically and

retain the domestic virtue and spic and span moralities of the late Prince Consort.

But his greatness was now demonstrated; that gave her keenest joy. But even so, the joy was less than the relief. For his infidelities had been so hard to bear; his cynical estimates of men and things had sometimes seemed so cheap. It had nearly been her shame, at times, to know that she loved him, that he so dominated her senses as to compromise her spirit. How different now! She could not only love him openly even to herself, but she could be proud. Her devotion was to no tawdry hero; nay, it constituted a glad sacrifice, such as the wives of great men ever had been called upon to yield. Yet he had only assumed a privilege of greatness, and for the privilege of being wife to a great man, a noble woman willingly would pay.

With her readjusted estimate her woman's heart went out; she would beg forgiveness for her narrow-mindedness; she would recompense him in the future for all those blind lost years.

The future! Recollection came like a stab—her future would not be long enough to do it in.

She went upstairs to have herself arrayed. When her great man came home to her after his day of triumph, he should find a wife royally attired, wearing her diamonds, besprinkled with pearls, all to honor him. If she were not beautiful

or young, she was assured she could be at least what he more highly valued, sumptuous and regal. She would find favor in his eyes, when her pomp proclaimed to him what was the truth, that he owned a wife whom in riches and in power not five women in all America could surpass.

XXV

HIS HOME-COMING

THE house was very still, and Mrs. Corlis walked to and fro through its wide rooms, dim except for the reflection from the illumined hall. Mr. Jarrett had gone to bed and the servants had disappeared; only one sleepy footman remained nodding in the entry by the great street-door.

As she wandered through the stretch of rooms, her mind went running back among the years, fifteen of them, that she had been a married woman. They had been years of service; the recognition of that fact was not new to her. That they also had proved years of success, of helping a great man to his own, was new. And the consolation afforded by this new perception, she hugged tightly to her heart.

It allowed her to recall more fondly than she had been able to recall for years, the particulars of her romance and of the life they had lived together. How he had entered in his calm, masterful manner and, as at a stroke, altered all the world for her; how she had picked him out herself and taken him up, so to speak, with the ca-

price of royalty; how she had fought the battle with her father and her uncle, compelling them to welcome him! Then after she had married him, what had she not done in his behalf: given him opportunity, pleaded with her Uncle Johnny for his advancement, shaped her whole career to accord with his ambitions, conquered a leadership in fashionable society to gratify his vanity. In truth, she had donned his livery and worn his crest.

Withal she could not truthfully affirm that she had influenced him perceptibly, or changed the orbit of his course her finger's breadth. Bluntly put, he had used her as a ladder by which to climb. The perception of this truth had, heretofore, been her bitterness; now she conceived of it as her glory, held the sweeter because of the sacrifice it had entailed.

She had met Walter Corlis first in Washington. He was then a clerk in one of the government departments at a salary of fifteen hundred a year. He was born in New York, where his father had been a local politician and small contractor, admired for his tailor-like appearance, popular on account of his geniality, and considered as one of the few gentlemen attached to Tammany Hall. His mother was a Virginian, who boasted, when none were present to deny her fabrications, of the feudal magnificence of her family before the war. Corlis himself affected to rely upon his pedigree,

but in reality he trusted his future to his good looks and his manner of distinction. Most of his salary was put upon his back.

Mrs. Corlis could remember her exact impression the first time she saw him. His hair was raven black and his skin clear and without color. His surfaces possessed a marmorean texture, and she had thought immediately of statuary. His figure increased the effect, as of a young god: while under six feet, his symmetry was stately, the shoulders broad, the chest deep, and the limbs endowed with a natural grace.

He was but upon the edges of society; yet he had admirers and friends who spoke well of him. He was very active in a fashionable Episcopal church, and very grateful for any recognition from the least of those above him. His characteristics commended him. The union of beauty and strength, his possession of suavity and pride, impressed women more than could intellect, which is open to challenge, or character, which is open to doubt. Besides, it was that period in our social development when a gentlemanly young man had a value for his own sake.

How promptly she had fallen in love with him. And he, despite his gratitude and his humility, had rather accepted the condescension as perhaps his due, than on his own account wooed and won

the richest heiress and most brilliant toast of the capital.

Her father had endeavored to remonstrate, or, at least, to postpone the finality. He was not opposed because of the young clerk's impecuniosity. But he had formed intellectual ambitions for his daughter; he wished her to marry some man of genius, some future leader of the nation. He cherished a scholarly admiration for the women of the French salons, and, in view of his daughter's reputation for wit and of her friendships with statesmen, he had dreamed that she might, in Washington, repeat the achievements of Dolly Madison and of Kate Chase.

She had appealed from her father to her uncle.

"Come over and help me," she wrote.

J. J. J. replied,

"Of course, if that is what you want. Only be sure you are not fooled." And he hastened back from Europe to look the young man over and to gratify his darling, if he could.

"Um," he exclaimed, and combed his loose beard with his fingers. "He's nobody's fool, Vicky. Might be a little more so for my taste. His eye's mighty cool, and I guess he likes luxuries and to have people bow to him."

She had flamed out magnanimously, "If you mean he wants money, Uncle Johnny, why shouldn't he, and why shouldn't he have it, too?

He is a gentleman and entitled to it. Besides, he's fitted to adorn any position, and I do not want him to feel the lack of money any more."

J. J. J. looked at his niece and quietly capitulated.

"Well, well, Vicky, I guess your Uncle Johnny 'll have to see about it."

To Senator Dawes he said:

"Simeon, it ain't any use opposing her. Her mind's set, I guess, and that sort of set she gets good and plenty from both sides of the house." A twinkle illumined J. J. J.'s eye.

He proved more than liberal; he sent them to Europe for their wedding tour and he afterwards made Corlis his representative in Chicago. He built her a house on the Lake Shore Drive and he bought her a cottage at Newport. He gave her securities and properties, besides yearly adding to his gifts until she was counted one of the richest women in her own right in America. He helped Corlis consistently and acknowledged the latter's great capacity; nevertheless, he made it impolitely plain that Corlis shared his favor and was advanced because "Vicky said so."

Mrs. Corlis had ceased her walking and now lay half-reclined on a window-seat in the dimmest corner of the drawing-room. And as her mind moved back through recollection's maze, it chose to dwell upon the pleasing things of her marriage,

and to slight what she had suffered. But, despite the gladness the recognition of her husband's success had brought to her, despite the relief occasioned by the demonstration of his greatness, strive as she might, she could not wholly eject from her consciousness a dully remorseful conviction that she herself had deteriorated. For him she had done everything, even changed her ideals. Had it cost her soul nothing?

She was roused by the striking of a clock four times. She half sat up.

"The conference with those politicians must have been interminable," was her thought.

Then she heard a sound in the hall and she knew he had come. She started to her feet, smoothing out her skirts. She was trembling as she went forward; she hoped she was not disarrayed. She stood back a bit from the broad stream of light that came in from the hall. She could hear his slow steps on the marble and she shrank, she was so eager.

As he came through the doors, with an effort she stepped into the light, her hands outstretched to welcome him, in her eyes almost a bridal loveliness.

He stepped toward her and half turned, so that the light struck his face. She stood rooted, turned to stone.

The high hat on his head was tilted and his

cravat was twisted to one side. His frock coat was rumpled and unbuttoned at the top. His face was fixed and pallid and his eyes had an unseeing look.

"Victoria," he commenced with gravity. Only a slight tremor was in his voice. "You understand I'm a statesman, a great man, a statesman. I am Governor Corlis, his excellency, and you're his excellency's wife. You're proud of me; you ought to be proud of me; say you are."

He lurched as he stood and put an arm out to restore his balance. His loose hand struck a Japanese vase from a pedestal. It crashed on the hardwood floor.

"What's that?" He peered as if down a precipice. "Oh, that, Victoria, is how the Senator would have smashed, if it hadn't been for me. I am the boss of the bosses, I am! I run McBride and the state."

She conquered her physical repugnance. His vinous vanity made him pitiable. She stepped close to him.

"Come, Walter, come. I'll help you."

He was filled for a moment with maudlin sentiment.

"I need it, Vicky. You are—too good—to me."

Was it fancy, or did she perceive a faint odor of Turkish cigarettes? She laid her hand on his

breast to take his attention. Her fingers felt silken strands. She caught back her hand, as if it had touched fire. Alive, she looked. He was turned full to the light now, and nets of blonde hair shone on the breast of his coat.

She stared, then recoiled as if struck, and slid lifelessly to the floor at his feet.

The drunkard apostrophized above her. He babbled of his own glory, of his power and coming fame.

"I'll be the foremost American," he vowed.

XXVI

A POLITICAL BREAKFAST

HER mind clung tenaciously to the conception of her husband's greatness, and if anywhere her mind failed in faith, her will insisted upon its truth.

The morning papers were brought in to her with her chocolate and she scanned their columns in bed. Announcement of the nominations and news of the Convention led the front page of every one, the name of the nominee for governor being printed in big, black type. The whole first page of *The Pundit,* indeed, was occupied by a picture of Walter H. D. Corlis, while directly beneath, in the narrow margin left at the bottom, appeared a summary of the main events of his life. Every paper, besides, devoted two columns or more to an account of the man and his remarkable career. Their reading impressed Mrs. Corlis with the fact that the editorial imagination had been captured just as that of the Convention had been won.

It was evident that his figure, his personality, his good-fortune, appealed to the average American as romantic; that his success was about what the wide-awake usual man would have desired for

himself, if wishes had been notes of demand. This gentleman, the editors virtually said, whom we present to the attention of the public this morning, deserves your admiration: he is the son-in-law of Senator Dawes, the husband of that leader of fashion, Mrs. Corlis, the representative in Chicago of his wife's uncle, J. J. Jarrett; he is a millionaire himself, destined ultimately to colossal wealth, and he is head of the powerful syndicate which controls Chicago's transportation; he has now been nominated for governor, he will most probably be elected, and as he is an astute politician and an able manager, it is not exaggeration to declare that some day he may become President of the United States.

The Pundit's picture of Mr. Corlis pleased his wife. The longer she looked at it, the more inclined she was to pronounce it remarkable. Indeed, it quite fascinated her eye, as, she fancied proudly, it must have fascinated the thousands who had seen *The Pundit* that morning. The likeness, she felt, reproduced what was Mr. Corlis' best aspect, certainly his strongest; its effect, she repeated, was not untrue, although she owned that it was favorable. But all who regarded victorious beauty in a man, must be strongly drawn by it; she herself not the least, even if she suspected the Cæsarean line in the profile was empha-

sized, and the curvature of indulgence luckily or dexterously suppressed.

At the angle presented in the picture the nose showed finely aquiline and the set of the firm chin indicated resolution and sustained fighting force, while the arch of the upper head bespoke the moral and intellectual balance of the great man. True, there were idealizations, or better, perhaps, accentuations of the real; yet the picture was a might-have-been Mr. Corlis, nay, Mr. Corlis as he essentially was. Gold, she told herself, was precious gold, whether in alloy or in state of purity.

Mrs. Corlis was to give a small political breakfast that morning at noon, and at eleven o'clock she went downstairs to review the arrangements, and add the last touches with her own hands to the table. There her husband's man came to her to say that Mr. Corlis was dressing and wanted the morning papers.

"They are all in my room; ask my maid," she directed. "But wait," she amended, "I will take them to Mr. Corlis myself in a moment." It would afford her an opportune chance, she reflected, to show that she had forgotten the event of the night before.

Bearing the voluminous newspaper sheets, she stood at the threshold of her husband's dressing-room. He was dressed except for his coat, and

standing before the glass parting his thinning hair. She admired his thin waist, set off by his waistcoat, and fancied how well he looked in white shirt-sleeves.

She was all smiles.

"Like Lord Byron, Walter, you awake this fine morning to find yourself famous. Do I intrude?"

"Come in, Victoria." He dismissed the shade of annoyance that had appeared in his face. "I am honored."—Did some irony linger in his tone?—"Perhaps I may owe you some small apology for last night. Is it not so?" He made a solicitous bow and set his wife a chair.

She sat down, well in the center of the room.

"Oh, I think of nothing this joyful morning but of what the newspapers say," she declared cordially. "They're grand, Walter!" And she flaunted them gaily before his eyes. "See, see!" she cried.

He took his honors easily.

"Pray tell me about them, Victoria, or you might read me extracts, while I polish myself off for your show," he smiled good-humoredly. Then he yawned a bit. "Your breakfast has pulled me out of bed a little too soon, I fancy; I needed another half hour for perfection. Wonder how the other fellows feel."

She disregarded his remarks. "How do you

like this, Walter?" she inquired, "or this piece of eulogy"—"And this. Is not this a great compliment?"—"Here is the old *Times,* calling you The Man Destined to be President"—"Do listen to this; did you ever dream such fine things would be said of you?"

Her enthusiasm increased to rhapsody; she brimmed over with the naïve joy of a child.

"Why, I didn't fancy they were half so nice till I read them," she declared. "They are splendid. Oh, I am so pleased! There's nothing in all the world, Walter, to be compared with hearing you praised, nothing whatever.—And the picture of you in *The Pundit,* is it not just the best? A chance stroke of genius, I call it.—Do you not see, it is you at your truest and greatest, Walter,—you, as I always think to myself you are."

He gave signs of restlessness under this growing poetical appreciation, and she quickly reverted to earth. "Wherever did they get it from, I wonder?"

"Glad you like it, Victoria—picked it out for them myself," Mr. Corlis explained, as he gave a last brush to his hair. "You see before the Convention yesterday I looked over all the photographs I had ever had taken; I knew, of course, I was to be nominated and that I'd have all the newspapers after me for my latest picture. So I had it ready for them—never neglect the press, is

my maxim. Unfortunately I found only one copy of that picture, and it I sent 'round to *The Pundit*, with the request that they use it if they meant to publish my picture at all. I regretted I did not have more of them, as I thought, myself, the likeness was calculated to impress people pretty well with me." He ended with a laugh.

She said presently she must go look after her breakfast.

"Whom do you expect?" her husband inquired. "I suppose, since it turns out I am the nominee, I must consider myself the guest of honor."

"On the contrary," she smiled back. "It's not you, it's the Pater. I have invited a number of his friends to meet Mr. McBride and some of the latter's henchmen, as I suppose they are to be called. Mayor Murphy will be present and two other Irishmen besides."

"You wish to rivet your alliance for time and eternity, I see," laughed Mr. Corlis. "You don't mean to let anything get away from you."

"My wish is to promote harmony," she rejoined. "Confess, please, I have managed rather well."

"There is no doubt of that, Victoria—you're a diplomat of the first water. You certainly have reduced McBride to obedience, and you've annexed his wife, too." He added, as if from a sud-

den inspiration, while he watched her, in a cautious aside, "I only wish you would do the same by that obstreperous old friend of yours, Governor Ransom. If he, now, were to be one of your guests, Victoria, this dinner would be really worth while."

"Would it not," she frankly agreed. "But the conquest of a boss, I fear, is a light task compared to that of a governor; especially such a formidable incorrigible as Randolph Ransom." She laughed uneasily.

"Oh, I'm not so sure," he urged. "You must know him as few others can. I'd like to have you happen to meet him again, I can tell you; I would bet on my own chances more cheerfully, if you did."

Mrs. Corlis looked at her husband with sudden sharpness. Did he mean what he said—or rather, was there any meaning in what he said? But Mr. Corlis was critically surveying his clothed figure in the glass, and his face, taken up with small cares, upon the large point of her anxiety was inscrutable.

The Convention had not adjourned the night before until after eleven o'clock, as the nominations to supplement that for governor could not be finished at an earlier hour. The politicians who sat down to Mrs. Corlis' breakfast accordingly had all come from late beds, and the mood of

none of them could be described as brisk. The nominee himself was the only man around the board, except J. J. J., of course, who did not bear marks of the strain the week had been. Mr. Corlis was freshly shaven, just out of his tub, as gay and debonair as if he had been an irresponsible young man of twenty-six, instead of the cool schemer of forty-five, immersed in cares and plenty of sins.

At the right hand of his niece sat J. J. J., taciturn, inquisitive, dreamy, holding all of them in his fear. Boss McBride held the seat of honor next Mr. Corlis, while Senator Dawes filled that on his son-in-law's other hand. Between, completing the circle, were ranged the Senator's friends, Crawford, Wood, and Johnson, alternating with Mayor Murphy and two other representatives of the Chicago Machine. Ruggles, whom Mrs. Corlis had invited because she wished him to meet intimately the powers she had assembled at her table, was placed upon the hostess' left, since she fancied the proximity would contribute to his assurance, as well as to the respect accorded him by the others.

Apart from the power of her arts, Mrs. Corlis was singularly attractive that morning. Dark circles underscored her eyes, her mouth could not succeed in concealing all its pain, while her voice was not wholly sure—it trembled slightly. Su-

perficially she was in the gayest spirits, and it might have been a physical mood which colored sadly the blitheness of her tone. Yet those men, who were in awe of her, overwhelmed by her prestige, discovered, subtly, the weakness of the woman behind the confidence of the grand dame, and if, before, they had been disposed to kneel in homage, they were now ready to bow in idolatry.

As it turned out, the breakfast had not progressed far before Governor Ransom became the theme; the conversation constantly reverted to him, even after it had been a number of times obviously led into other directions.

Mr. Corlis, to notice his wife's protégé, and, perhaps, to turn the subject without seeming to do so, observed:

"That was a brilliant description in this morning's *Pundit* of the Governor's *tour de force*. We are to suppose you guilty of it, Mr. Ruggles, are we not?"

Chris reddened.

"Yes, I wrote it, Mr. Corlis. We reporters, as you know, are required to advance the picturesque incident, if such can by any means be discovered," he explained. "That accounts for the papers making so much of the speech, although in actual political effect it probably amounted to very little."

"Ransom always did possess the faculty of

seizing the dramatic moment and getting himself in the middle of the stage," observed Senator Dawes. "It is that invariable instinct of his that keeps him before the public."

"But what of it," rumbled the Boss, "it all don't help him none. He's helped fill up the papers with himself this morning, and yesterday he stopped proceedin's for a bit; but he's ousted from the committees, and he didn't turn a delegate from where he was to go."

The Senator was disposed to argue.

"I don't know, McBride; I'm not so sure. That it was a powerful deliverance we must all admit, and well as I know the Governor, I didn't think he had it in him."

"But what did the whole hullabaloo amount to at that, is what I want to know," snorted McBride, not in disdain of the Senator, but in contempt for the speech. "Mebbe it made him feel fine, but that's all he'll get out of it."

"Even of that I'm not so sure," replied "Uncle Simeon" with a dryness exasperating to McBride. "These newspapers that make so much of the speech and so much of the scene, will circulate all through the state; thousands will read them, thousands will be impressed."

"Let the Governor have the newspapers, and the processions, too, if he wants 'em bad," the Boss asserted, "so we get the delegates in Con-

vention and the organization afterwards. It's them that produces votes."

"No doubt, no doubt," acquiesced the Senator, in his driest and drollest manner, "but there is one thing you don't want to lose sight of, McBride, and that's the little joker, called Public Opinion. Don't get it stirred up; for, if you do, the peepul will be heard."

McBride bristled. Perhaps he felt it well to show his followers their chief was too big a man to be silenced by a Senator; but Mr. Corlis suavely intervened:

"You mistake the Senator, excuse me, McBride, and the Senator mistakes you. You are thinking of Chicago, naturally, while the Senator is thinking of the state. And if there are any two who know more about each respectively than you two, let the pair trot out; I have not the honor of their acquaintance." He smiled and paused.

The Senator deferred; the Boss looked appeased.

"You're right there, Mr. Corlis," Mayor Murphy said.

"And McBride is right," resumed Mr. Corlis, "so far as the effect of the speech on Chicago goes. But Governor Ransom was not talking for Chicago's benefit, not primarily even to the Convention, I suppose. From that platform he was

addressing Illinois, the down-the-state region, and that is the Senator's old stamping ground."

"Well, who cares? Let him chin." McBride threw up his hands, to speak figuratively; the subject had become too involved for him.

"That is the trouble, he will," rejoined Mr. Corlis. "Unless, indeed," he looked quizzically about the table, "some one here knows how to muzzle him. We've no man down the state, gentlemen, who can deliver us the vote, as McBride here can Chicago's, sealed, sworn to, and attested." He paused again. "Has any one a plan?" he asked.

"It ain't my funeral," grunted the Boss; "it's not inside my district."

He was not converted, though silenced. At this period of his career Chicago constituted the sum and boundary of the knowledge of McBride: it was later, and through defeat, that he learned the temper of the state. He had not yet acquired "the polish" he was gradually to take on; he was, in fact, but a ward boss developed into a city boss, and wistfully anxious for some recognition from Springfield and from Washington. He was as ignorant of matters without Cook County as he was confirmed in the correctness of his judgments of matters within, and hence his severe skepticism concerning all things not absolutely under his nose. What experience had taught him

he would rigidly apply to what he had never experienced,—a positivism not monopolized by men of the type of McBride.

At this juncture Senator Dawes inclined his head just perceptibly in the reporter's direction, and winked an eye in slow decorum.

"We are upon the verge of an important discussion of ways and means," he suggested.

"Oh, I will stand sponsor for Mr. Ruggles," quickly declared Mrs. Corlis. "Mr. McBride will join me on his bond, I am sure."

"Anything you want, Mrs. Corlis," the Boss said, answering her smile. "And, young feller," he added, addressing Ruggles, "if not for Mrs. Corlis, I'd do it on Miss Brown's account." His big face beamed with pleasure for the "one he had put on Chris." Out of a friendly feeling he admonished him, "Remember McBride, when you get yourself into trouble."

Chris blushed, a phenomenon which Mr. Corlis noted.

"So that is her name," hastily whispered Mrs. Corlis. She announced,

"Thank you, Mr. McBride. Mr. Ruggles, I assure everybody, is wholly of my party, and his efforts, I fancy, are pledged for my candidates."

"Ah, I drink to your enlistment, Mr. Ruggles," smiled Mr. Corlis. The company raised their glasses, enjoying the humor.

But " how to muzzle Ransom " soon reclaimed, as a subject, the attention of the table. If each guest was heard upon the question, no guest proposed any practicable method. The best suggestion came from Senator Dawes, who had been the Governor's intimate political friend for twenty years. Finally the sense of them all confided the matter to the discretion of " Uncle Simeon," with the understanding that the latter should try how far his influence would avail with his former lieutenant.

" I think some of going down to Primrose Hill for a week, to rest up before I go back to Washington," explained the Senator. "And mebbe I can induce Governor Ransom to drop up from Springfield for a day to sort of talk it over." The Senator dug a fork absent-mindedly into the tablecloth. " Now, if I could get Mrs. Corlis to go down with me and open the house and entertain a Governor as he should be entertained, I think it might help some," he said, almost slyly. " I will appeal to the gentlemen present," he smiled benignly at them all. " Do they not think one of Mrs. Corlis' breakfasts might go pretty far toward persuading the Governor? "

Opinion was unanimous.

" Give him one of them dinners, Mrs. Corlis; it'll sejuice his heart," cried Boss McBride enthusiastically, his tongue thick from wine.

She winced at the verb.

"Oh," she laughed forcedly, "it will be impossible for me to go down. I can't leave Uncle Johnny, can I, Uncle Johnny?"

J. J. J. disagreed.

"Business is business, Vicky. I've got to go East to-morrow again, and if your heart's really set on carrying this election, you had better all get after that man Ransom. He's the feller to be fixed, I guess."

XXVII

CHARACTERISTICS

"I WILL do all I can; I see how important it is," she finally agreed. "I am not clear in my mind how I can influence Governor Ransom, but if I can, I will. As you say, it will not do for us to leave untried any chance, and," she smiled rather pitifully, "I suppose I am a chance."

Mrs. Corlis spoke thus without lifting her eyes to her husband, who, with hat and gloves in hand, had come into his wife's room to bid her good-by.

"Thank you, Victoria," he expressed himself gratefully, "I am sure you can do much, if you will. You are as clever a wife as ever an ambitious man was blessed with, and I wish you could know how much I admire and appreciate you."

Her yearning conquered her skepticism; she put back her head to give him a deep glance from her eyes.

"Ah, you do, a little, don't you, Walter? I mean something to you, after all—I weigh in your life?"

The little emotional outburst, quiet and undramatic as it was, annoyed as usual. But he repressed the irritation and politicly bent over her chair, lightly to kiss her cheek.

"What do I not owe you, Victoria? Your council, your encouragement, your talent for management, have enabled me to succeed so far. If I am elected, I shall know whom to thank. You must not think ever that I'm unappreciative, because at times I find it hard to own how much I have been made by my wife."

The tears sprang into her eyes; she turned her face away that they might not disturb him.

"You are generous, dear Walter."

"We part the best of friends then," he said, briskly. He looked at the clock. "It's a quarter of eleven and I must meet McBride down town on the hour. Good-by and good luck."

She called after him,

"Rest assured I will do all that I can."

She was not assured in her own mind that she had not been cajoled; but the suspicion was uncomfortable, and she preferred the warmth of her heart's glow, even if it were inspired by an untruth. She preferred to believe he had testified, however reluctantly, to her importance in his life; she wished to be convinced that she had a function. That function she knew she had adequately performed. What woman in all America had done for her husband what she had done—how many were capable of doing it? How many had failed, when they tried.

She could do delicately and deftly what others

bungled; she was a power, she had molded events. She compelled her husband's respect and earned his thanks. She it was who had brought about the reconciliation between her father and Boss McBride, which had enabled her husband to be named by the Convention; one other necessity existed which must be met in order to elect the nominee, and tacit consent had assigned the duty to her. She felt the compulsion of the obligation; she was constrained by the honor to be won of her husband's approval; she was influenced by the exigency of her father's reëlection. Besides, she felt the drawing spell of the game, the excitement of the hazard, and she increasingly desired to put her own hand to the tangle and to straighten out the strings.

Yet this woman, instinct now with the crafty faculty for management, was the same who, the day before, had been moved to a benevolent interference in behalf of a love affair she suspected was not moving to a beneficent conclusion. She had contrived, after the breakfast, to isolate Chris Ruggles with herself for ten minutes.

"Chris," she had teased, "the tall, golden-crowned young woman who did not like it when I went over to speak to you in the Convention, I am sure was the Miss Brown Mr. McBride had his joke about."

"How did you know that?" asked honest Ruggles, in sheer embarrassment.

"Know what—know that she was jealous?" rallied Mrs. Corlis. "Oh, she didn't pretend to conceal it. I can feel her wrathful eyes sticking into me still. She is rather glorious, I think."

"I assure you, Mrs. Corlis, you are mistaken—she would never be jealous."

"Exactly what you are expected to affirm, my dear Chris; but, believe me, we women know women, as a thief catches a thief. But, tell me, what is the rest of her name; I've been styling her Brunhild."

"I call her a Valkyr myself," replied Chris, delighted, "but her full name is just Hildegarde Brown."

"A melodramatic-prosaic agglomeration," said Mrs. Corlis, smilingly.

"It resembles herself, Mrs. Corlis." He was all enthusiasm. "She looks the Valkyr—you saw it—yet what she calls herself is a business woman. She is as shrewd as a Jew in some ways, and in others more generous than any Christian I know."

"That's a paradox peculiar to Chicago, I fancy."

"Oh, she incarnates Chicago; she can have impracticable enthusiasms, and she can drive a bargain to strip the coat off one's back."

"I wish I knew her," mused Mrs. Corlis.

"I wish you might," he exclaimed. "But it would be too much to expect."

"Why, I'm not above knowing whomever I want to know," she smiled. "Ask Mrs. McBride how she and I get along."

"Mrs. McBride and she are intimate friends," said Chris.

"Ah, then I shall make her acquaintance, I know; I can tell Mrs. McBride how anxious I am to know her. And you, Chris, must persuade her to be willing to meet me; for I'm not in her good books, I fear."

"I never can believe that, Mrs. Corlis; but I am sure I can remove her prejudices."

Chris proceeded to make his adieux, pleading the necessity of his appearance at *The Pundit* offices.

"It was very kind of you to have me to your breakfast," he said warmly. "I think it quite an honor, indeed."

"I am glad you could be here, Chris; I wanted you to meet all these men, and to have them understand you were my friend."

Her cordial eyes expressed her sincerity.

"Sometimes we reporters are able to help a little in a way," he responded, rather clumsily; "we can shove things along; and maybe I can be of some service in my newspaper work in the campaign, Mrs. Corlis."

"That's good of you, Chris. I shall remember it, and expect you to aid us, when the opportunity comes."

She accompanied him even to the door, as an act of graciousness, and saw him helped to his hat and stick and bowed out by deferential servants.

There was one charge that never was brought against Mrs. Corlis; no one ever accused her of being a snob.

XXVIII

AT PRIMROSE HILL

THE long lands lay about the house, undulous to the verge of sunset. Like some gorgeous rug the variegated pattern of meadow, pasture, grainfield, woodland, rolled away, green and gold and rusty bronze, with the black of denser foliages in the distance. Eastward the slope went downward to the banks, and porches scanned the scene—the curving reaches of the river, wending miles away, and the stretch of level prairies spotted by great shadows of the clouds.

In the rooms of this, her childhood's home, peace abode, and there brooded that deep sleep which is medicinal. Soundless evenings followed one upon another in a rare succession, and still midnights hung their canopies about the chamber in which she lay. A week of livelong slumberous days she passed, stretched prone in a long willow chair set in the deep porch, whose high roof fat Corinthian columns upbore. On afternoons, when sunrays commenced to slant, she wandered down across the bridge and up the long village street, at her heels two dogs, descendants of those friends who had been the companions of the rambles of her youth.

She passed the ruined forge, whereat Chris Ruggles' father had wrought so long, and she recalled the great figure of the man, his leathern apron, the muscles of his arms, and his good, sad, kindly face. How often he had ceased his blows to talk to her about his boy at college, while the water had made furrows in the grime upon his cheeks.

Also she smiled each day to see the Senator affect the farmer. It was a delicious pastoral comedy. He fell into the agricultural dialect and drawl and essayed bucolic figures of speech, which he illustrated with uncouth gestures. She beheld him, mornings, tramping off through the dews in his cowhide boots, and, twilights, hanging on the pasture bars, deep in the confidences of the hired man. She was convinced that, had it not been for the mails and the visits of the politicians, he would have taken rod and reel and surreptitiously escaped for whole days down the river.

Father and daughter, that silent week, renewed their earlier intimacy, reviving, in a sense, the summers of long ago, when they had lived and played and studied side by side in the old homestead.

Then she had been known from the Ohio to the Lake as " the Senator's little girl," and sentimental people from many counties wrote her father asking for her photograph. Moreover, he

had taken her much about with him up and down the state, wherever he went to make a speech. The politicians all had petted her, and she had perched upon the knee of many a pilgrim who had journeyed to Primrose Hill to advise with Senator Dawes and to secure his influence.

Thus she had first known Randolph Ransom, when she was still a slip of a girl of twelve and he a young politician of but twenty-two. He had adored, straightway, the dark-eyed, gracious-spoken child, his fancy taken with her quick brain, her tolerant air and imperious assertion. Even then, she now remembered, he was unhappy, with the poignant, egotistical unhappiness of ardent youth. He seemed to have found out early, or always to have known, that life held no reality to justify grandiose dreams, and out of a fit of spleen, to "euchre" life perhaps, he concentrated on Mademoiselle, as he called her, the intense, unacknowledged poetry of his haughty, ironical soul. How she had assumed control of him from the start, "bossed" him, laughed at him, visited capricious moods upon him, harassed his heart, to reward him well with one delicious golden hour of childish, prattling confidence, and arch, elusive fondness.

This great friendship grew, until, when she was twenty and he thirty, Ransom had become avowedly her lover, and she had admitted in her

heart that some day she might possibly be his wife. If the Senator perceived the situation, he wisely pretended to be blind; but he esteemed Ransom highly, and often told his daughter that the young man was the " smartest " politician, for his years, in Illinois.

She knew now that, had she not married Walter Corlis, she would have married that first friend of hers. And, since she had again seen him in the Convention, after many years, the idle speculation of her brain, when she had nothing else to do, had been busy with him. She vaguely wondered, romantically, as women will, if he realized how near she had been to consenting to become his wife, and she suspected it was for her sake he had remained a bachelor. She acknowledged in her inner mind, what as a younger woman she would have indignantly denied, that what had determined her to marry the man she did was the fact that he stirred her passion. Perhaps, she mused, Ransom had suffered by reason of a too great reverence, and had failed because he had not tried a storm.

Senator Dawes announced, one morning, that he had heard from Governor Ransom.

" I expect he'll be here to-night, Vicky, in time for dinner. And I don't think I need remind you "—the Senator looked sly and droll—" that if, from some points of view, the Governor stands

as a rank demagogue, from a culinary standpoint he is a most inveterate aristocrat. And it's necessary, you know, that we should do everything to induce in him a delectable frame of mind."

Mrs. Corlis inquired how he had managed to persuade the Governor to come.

"I wrote him," replied the Senator, "from Chicago. I said I wanted to see him, and this is his reply. He says that he would ask me down to Springfield, but as Primrose Hill has fewer eyes to be inquisitive, he invites himself up here, and I suppose he is now on his way."

"It was easier than you supposed to get him to meet you," she observed. "He's not aware that I am with you, of course?"

"It's not likely; I don't see how he could know." The Senator rubbed his hands, for he was in excellent good humor. "Everything seems to be disposed as it should be," he drawled on, "and we ought to be able to make him see reason, I think. Randolph, I'm sure, has a real regard for me, and I'd risk a guess he has not forgotten you."

He cast his old eyes up; he knew his world so surprisingly well, did the Senator, that sometimes evidence of the fact astonished even his daughter.

"And now we've got him here, we must not let him go unimpressed," he playfully admonished. "We elect or defeat ourselves in the next few

hours, right here, my child. Why," he declared, enthusiastically, "once Ransom promises us he will let sleeping dogs lie, we can bottle up Egypt all by itself and slip the whole program through without a squeak."

His words, his manner, served to provoke in her a dislike of her mission, which led her to remark,

"But after that speech of his in the Convention, Pater, I hardly see how you can expect to persuade him. He cannot with consistence remain quiet, can he."

"Oh, Ransom is an inconsistent dog," rejoined the Senator. "He is as often controlled by his passions, his hatreds, and his friendships, as he is by his logic or his interests or principles. I'd say he was a gambler, only, while he plays to win, he doesn't care much if he loses. My hope is to hold him by his friendship for me, by making him realize my exigency. And I rely a good deal upon what you can do, Vicky."

His reliance, amounting practically to a demand, excited her to almost a resentment, illogically enough, considering the motive which had brought her to Primrose Hill. But that feeling she carefully concealed from her father's eyes.

The Governor arrived late that afternoon; it was a Saturday. Mrs. Corlis, standing at a window upstairs, unseen, witnessed the meeting be-

tween the two men. Governor Ransom sprang from the carriage which had been sent to fetch him from the station. Senator Dawes had come out upon the front steps to bid him welcome.

"By God, Senator, how are you?" exclaimed Ransom, as he grasped the former's hand.

"Randolph, my boy, I am glad to see you here," Senator Dawes declared, putting an arm around his guest.

"Good; we'll have a high old time, Uncle Simeon—a regular riotous, reckless time, I reckon. I've brought along a few new stories to swap for your old ones over our toddy, and you've got to show me the farm and your stock." He stopped on the steps to turn and look about. "God, how green it is, and this air is wine—which reminds me," he added whimsically, "that what I most want's a drink. Now, if you were like me, Senator, you'd have a crowd of good fellows up here right along—be a great place to play poker in."

"Come in, come in, Randolph, my boy, and don't suggest frivolities. I belong to a staid generation, remember, one that didn't go to the dogs."

"Dogs, speaking of dogs," cried Ransom, "haven't you got any nowadays about the place? I recollect years ago your daughter used to be fond of dogs—I gave her a pup once myself."

The Governor looked a bit waggish and then a bit shamefaced.

"Well," said the Senator, "you know she is here with me—Mrs. Corlis, I mean. She is very anxious to see you again."

Ransom drew back.

"You don't say so. I didn't know that, or I'd—. Well, go ahead in. What's she like? I haven't seen her, not in years. By God, a funny world, Senator! I'll have to take a reef in my manners, I reckon."

XXIX

FOR WHOSE SAKE

THE man's years of hard living were written in his face—his years of gaming, drinking, swearing, scheming. There was a touch of swagger to his bearing and much in his manner of boisterous good-fellowship, alternating, as it were, with seconds of a grim saturninity. He evinced, in fine, the effect of exclusive companionship with men, all sorts of them, as well as of the banishment of women from his life.

But a subtle change half rectified the impression he produced, the moment his eyes rested upon Mrs. Corlis. She greeted him with a cordial smile and a frank hand-shake, while he bowed before her in some semblance of his old-time, half-forgotten Kentucky gallantry. She appeared a gracious figure, no doubt, to his famished eyes, significant of all that he had lost. The white hair was unfamiliar; but the height of her, the dark and sympathetic eyes, marked the woman as they had marked the girl.

The Governor sweetened or grew urbane, moreover, in the continued contact of her amenity. As

her entrance had sufficed to endow him with dignity, so her presence, her glance, her speech, unfolded gradually his almost forgotten qualities of charm and grace and fine consideration. The humorously cynical countenance that commonly he used for mask was insensibly displaced by a transparent nobility of expression, proof of the finer emotions she inspired. In fact, miraculously quick, she had contrived to rub the rust of rancors and disillusions off, so that something of the original geniality of him shone through.

This process consumed the dinner time, and quite likely the excellence of the food and the quality of the wines supplemented the spiritual argument. Mrs. Corlis understood how to make the conquest of a man.

The talk ran naturally upon old associations. The Governor recalled amusing episodes, and she let him see that she remembered even more than them. She admitted him without formality to that intimacy which had been characteristic of their friendship before discordant passions had put an end to it.

And she was inexpressibly winning thus; so free a comradeship informed her manner, such a disposition for even give-and-take, with a slighting implication upon her privilege as a woman—these externals. Then to the intercourse she

brought a knowledge diplomats might have envied her, a worldly experience, garnered in years of social striving and social achievement, a consummate tact and a rare flattery, plus, as a flux to blend them pleasantly, an amused sympathy with men and humorous toleration of their weaknesses, such as among good women, those distinguished by some masculine grasp of mind, alone can have.

The two men smoked in the porch after dinner —smoked, and eyed the sunset and the fading of the gold and crimson into the grayness of twilight. The felicity affected Ransom; that strenuous swashbuckler had not for years felt his nerves so much in tune. He recognized the cause; the harmony proceeded from the mitigating presence of what he styled, in old-time, stilted parlance, "a refined and high-bred lady." It possessed an elegance which mere money could not buy, or any man create; it produced content and satisfied the sense for music; it made mere living good.

He leaned back in his chair and felt these things, listening to her clear, low voice, while the thickening dusk made of them three opaque shadows.

Presently the Senator arose, tossed his cigar into the grass and passed into the house, saying as he went:

"When you've finished, Randolph, come into

the library and we'll discuss awhile. Meantime, you and Mrs. Corlis have your talk out."

The Governor smoked in silence for awhile, until the fiery point of his cigar remained, in the completed darkness, the only evidence of him. Mrs. Corlis talked at that.

She referred indirectly to her father's friendship for him, and then remarked how often the Senator talked of his career. She ended,

"Indeed, Governor Ransom, I do not know but that his anxiety about you the last six months has occupied him even more than his own worries. He has cherished the hope, until it has grown exceedingly dear to him, that you were to be his political heir. He discovered you, he claims, and you have been associated with his mind more intimately than has any one. Oh, believe me, it is a great grief to him that at this eleventh hour you and he should part."

He made no reply for a moment. Then, to judge from his voice, it was with an effort at lightness.

"Pshaw, we are still the best of friends, the Senator and I. A little matter, such as this of silver, Mrs. Corlis, may part us in opinion, but it cannot affect our personal relations. As it is, I do assure you, it has cost me a wrench to get myself up and to go it alone, after the years we have

worked in harness together. The Senator, I reckon, credits me with that."

"He does you full justice, I am sure, Governor Ransom," she rejoined. "But I must tell you he feels the desertions so keenly these latter days. For he is old and diminishing in usefulness, perhaps, and followers are looking for the rising sun; your old stanch alliance and long, long understanding, renewed, would restore his equanimity, I know, and he could then view with the philosophy he now lacks the defections and betrayals which rend his heart."

"Our old alliance, Mrs. Corlis, is impossible," Ransom answered, promptly, as if he desired at once to disabuse her mind of any such hope. He continued, as if to make what amends he could: "But you are aware how kindly are my feelings toward him; indeed, I think your father is the one real friend I have had in a lifetime."

"I know that, and I know, too, what has been your loyalty to friends, even to half friends, Governor Ransom."

An emotional note colored her voice—the note of suppressed appeal to his better nature for his aid.

"I know, who should know better," she repeated, "what a knight you are at heart, Randolph Ransom!"

Seconds of utter silence in the dark intervened.

"Yes, yes, I'm a regular ramping Don Quixote de la Mancha, I am," he snorted, impatient of the sentimentality she evoked, and of that which she would fain attribute to him. He heard her breathe, he divined how painful was her hurt, and proceeded to explain,

"You, of all women, need not be told what politics are, Mrs. Corlis, and you understand what has brought about this break. But I still respect your father and we remain friends, I reckon. If you had been at the Convention you would have observed that in my speech—and it was bitter, I'll own up—I said not one single word about the Senator that his warmest friend could take exception to."

"I was there," she hastened to state. "I heard you, Governor Ransom. I could not approve, of course, but it was—it was magnificent!"

"D——! my cigar's out—pardon me."

He struck a match and deliberately applied it to the end of a fresh cigar. The flame lit up his face. She saw the hard, shrewd lineaments before he dropped the brand. He moved restlessly in his chair and laughed ironically.

"I might as well make a clean breast of it, I reckon, since, it appears, you were there and heard all my abuse."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Corlis. She flushed hotly in the dark.

"I was mad, you see. Those fellows up there in Chicago euchred me. They first kept me inside the Convention hall by allowing me to construct the platform. Having me corraled, they reckoned they could repudiate my planks by nominating a man whose name, alone, assured a contradiction of every bimetallic utterance the platform contained—you will excuse me, you always liked plain speaking. They fooled me—it was mighty smart of them—but it was unscrupulous, I reckon."

"Perhaps they were but borrowing a leaf from your own book, Governor Ransom," she parried, humorously. "Napoleon taught his enemies the art of war, did he not?"

"To be sure, the boot on your own foot never did feel the same as when it was on the other fellow's," he whimsically admitted. "But, anyhow, they had me cinched. I could hardly bolt, I reckon, for technically they had me dead to rights. I had written the platform—where did my kick come in? I couldn't expect to be allowed to run the whole shooting match. If I walked out, I couldn't say it was for the sake of principle; it would be clear as three aces over two pair it was because the particular choice of the Convention to head the ticket didn't suit my personal taste—

which was too near the fact, I reckon, to be denied. That's why I got mad—because they had me nailed down fast. Besides, I felt it would be just as well to register my protest hard, so that if there's any turn of the wheel to come, I will be where I can get on and ride."

"Then you do not mean to bolt?" she asked, vast relief in her voice.

"Wish I could," he answered. "I reckon I'd do it mighty quick if I could see a way to, Mrs. Corlis. To tell the truth, that's why I am here to see the Senator, to learn if I can or not. But I'm dreadfully afraid your father is well able to give me the assurances I'll demand, and, if he does, I've got to remain in camp and take my medicine. They euchred me, those Chicago fellows—did me up brown, and I'm in a ridiculous hole, I reckon. The one saving clause to the proposition is that under the circumstances it may help the Senator some, and where I can, I always want to see him through."

"I believe you, Governor Ransom." It was said with faith.

He stood up.

"Now, I reckon I'll go talk to the Senator if you'll excuse me, Mrs. Corlis. It has been a precious treat to me to see you once more, and to talk to you again." Sincerity next moment vanished in the jest at his own expense—"I've got to go in

and find out whether the Senator can give me the assurances I don't want, or whether I can decently refuse what he is compelled to give. Quite mixed up, you see."

The night was warm and had waxed increasingly oppressive; she stayed in the porch a full hour after the Governor had left her.

A long sigh of relief escaped her; for, after all, she thought, it was circumstances and not the influence she had brought to bear, which would determine the Governor. She was glad she was superfluous. What had shamed her, as she had urged on her old friend the claims of her father to his forbearance, was the realization, suddenly brought home to her consciousness, that she was speaking not merely for her father's sake, but for her husband's—in behalf of the successful rival of the man to whom she was addressing her plea.

She wondered now if the Governor's acuteness had not detected her embarrassment; she suspected that it had, that he had had the grace to be merciful to her, taking her words at their face value, as for her father's sake alone. The chivalry he would not confess was just like Randolph Ransom.

Her cheeks flamed in the dark. Was she a hypocrite or a devoted wife? she asked herself. It made no difference as to what she was, that the necessity for her persuasion had not appeared.

She had come prepared to use persuasion, to assert that power over Ransom which she felt she still possessed. Even now she still would use it, it was probable, if expediency dictated its employment.

She questioned: Had she not already caused enough of ruin in his life? True, she could not, in reason, be charged with the responsibility of his tragedy or his career; yet, if he had suffered under the violence of his passions, she it was, however innocently, who had set them raging. Would she lightly, then, move to do him further mischief, to seduce his mind, to vary his career, for the benefit of the man she knew he hated—hated personally, as the robber who had stolen her from him—hated intellectually, as the type and representative of every political and commercial influence he opposed?

Mrs. Corlis was not merciful to herself that hour; possibly she was just. As a daughter she might be justified in endeavoring to influence Ransom; but as his rival's wife, was she? That was her quandary.

She rolled the scruple out to utter thinness in her mind, until, indeed, the tedious thing became a flimsy rag. Then in a frenzy she stamped on it. She did not know, she could not tell; she had the practical masculine impatience of nice abstractions. She felt, when all was said, that she served a

great man, that she sacrificed for him, that she would do evil in his cause, even as for his ambition she had given up her whole individuality, and had surrendered self for his entertainment and his pleasure. That devotion was the consecration of her life, without it she was a wrecked woman, disappointed, unhappy, ill.

She went upstairs to bed, and lay sleepless a long time. Through the wide-open windows came to her ears, distinctly, the argument between the Senator and Governor in the library downstairs. Her father's calm and modulated voice, the instrument of his reason, her former lover's piercing and uneven tones, sometimes fierce with a momentary passion, for the most part bitterly humorous, the accent of a man who felt the world as mean comedy and resented the conviction.

Senator Dawes argued like an astute logician, demonstrating, in half a dozen ways, the fallacy of Free Silver, and the peril in its threat to the foundations of commercial prosperity. Governor Ransom dealt with these proofs characteristically, the demonstrations affecting him about as much as water the proverbial duck's back. In rebuttal he presented evidence of the strength of the sentiment for Silver throughout southern Illinois, which seemed, to his mind, to constitute an adequate reply.

He ignored the merits of the question—it would

be invidious to assume he did not understand them. What appealed to the politician was the force, mustered or mustering, behind the Silver movement.

"Why, Senator," he contended, "this isn't local; it's a vanguard eddy of a national tide, I reckon. Silver spreads like a contagion, and two years from now it's bound to capture one or the other of the national parties. The sole question, to my way of thinking, is, which party it will choose to make its victim. It's as certain as God's judgment that the coming national election will be fought out on Silver for an issue. Now, what I want to know is this, why shouldn't the aspiring politician take advantage of the wave? We see it, two years ahead, far out at sea, coming like a race-horse. It will break things up some, I reckon, when it hits the shore."

XXX

AN ALLEGED DILEMMA

THE Sunday morning was idyllic; the cool of dawn and dew was in the air. Overhead the blue vault deepened and in it, stately ships, floated the steep clouds, white masses now, but thunderous in promise.

The church bells in the village pulsed silvery vibrations through the quiescent air; they touched the pagan ear of Ransom, as he strolled across the lawns, an unlit cigar between his working lips. The beauty and insinuating peace nearly beguiled him into weakness, or what to his mind constituted weakness; for sentimental needs he held he had dispensed with years ago, tender offices whose suggestion he had terminated with the destruction of his dream, rose in his heart and colored the vision of his eyes. The unbelieving, restless schemer, with his cynical estimate of life and his pitying contempt for men, suffered a half-hour of commonplace illusion and commonplace regret. Not the vanity of the practical struggle—the sense of that was always mocking him—but its distastefulness, its ugliness, contrasted in his mind with what the sweet refreshment and abiding sat-

isfaction of a simple life passed with books and nature and the woman whom one loved, might have been for him.

Senator Dawes, wearing a frock coat and crowned with a silk hat, came out of the house. He carried a black Bible under his arm, and, as he crossed the lawn in the direction of his guest, he drew on his gloves over his delicate, aristocratic hands. The Sabbatical austerity of his garb, in harmony with his shaven lip, lent him the aspect of the church elder.

"I'm about to walk in to church, Governor," he announced. "I guess there is no use inviting you to come along. Mrs. Corlis, she's staying home, too. By the looks of the sky, yonder, I shouldn't be surprised if we'd get a downpour before meeting's over. Guess I'll just take an umbrell to sort of make sure."

Ransom's gaze followed the old-fashioned figure down the road, villageward. He was aware that the Senator seldom troubled to attend church in Washington; but neither politics nor company could debar Uncle Simeon from a punctual observance of all religious services here at home.

"How shiftily the old shuffler plays the cards," reflected Ransom, his thin lips puckering cynically. "Ought to follow suit myself, I reckon; but I never could endure to be bored a moment over what was absolutely necessary. Well, the Sen-

ator's as slick as you find them; he fools himself while he's fooling other people, and not only other people, but he himself, have got a genuine conviction that he is immaculate. What a preposterous world God Almighty saw fit to set up, by Gosh!"

He swung completely on his heel outwardly to mark his outlandish wonder and irreverence, and, as he looked up, he spied Mrs. Corlis coming from the house out upon the lawn. A soft, white morning gown, lace ornamented and loosely disposed, concealed her wasted figure, and, despite her gray hair, imparted to her a look of youth. The illusion almost seized him—this was a pleasant morning, twenty years ago, and Victoria Dawes was summoning him to go for a walk with her. But she was nearer now, and the thinness of her cheeks, the hollows of her eyes, which the morning light revealed, dispelled the vision and smote his heart instead.

Stepping forward he hailed her with a "Good morning." Then the impulse to brighten her, at any cost, mastered him.

"You were not down to breakfast, but the Senator and I fixed it between us over the coffee and eggs. Cheer up, he'll be reëlected; I'm going to stay inside the breastworks and give him my support."

A sudden radiance suffused her dullness. Was

that sufficient reward? he asked himself. He hedged:

"Of course, there are conditions, certain conditions annexed. But he'll find them feasible"—he chased the recurring shadow from her face—"there won't be any question about that."

With a humorous and charming smile she put forth her two hands.

"You're a capital good fellow, Governor Ransom, and I don't know how to thank you."

He liked the acknowledgment, but he drawled deprecatingly,

"Not at all, oh, not at all. The Senator and I have been in too many fights together for me to fail him at this pinch. Though, I reckon, were he out, I'd secede mighty soon."

"And Silver?" she asked, inquisitively.

"Is postponed, adjourned—but side-tracked for good?—don't you believe it! After we've shelved the Senator in Washington for another six years, I'm going to put on war-paint. It will be Silver or Secession, a flat ultimatum."

The dark eyes flashed, though next moment defiance gave way to humor in the expression of the face.

She smiled at him, almost tenderly.

"Ah, I'm glad, then, that you have agreed to tie your own hands until next winter. By that time, when you are again free to act, Silver will be

dead, or dying, and you will have been saved despite yourself."

He bit his lip; perhaps he resented her assumption that the acceptance, on her part, of his generosity would prove his own salvation. He spoke dogmatically,

"Silver, in a year, will have matured as an issue. Its future does not depend on politicians, or upon who is Governor at Springfield. Silver is a raging fever in the veins of the people—it will not be easily expelled."

She felt he was offended, although the cause escaped her.

"I hold to my opinion," she said, with sweet insistence. "So you may have one thing to thank me for in years to come."

She looked archly wise. It was too much.

"Your complacence is not well considered," he rejoined bitterly. "My self-denying ordinance may help you; it isn't going to do me any good. On the contrary, it'll come near killing me, I reckon. My supineness will install a crowd at Springfield for four years with whom I have no affiliations and no sympathies. They will turn my friends out everywhere, and erect a new machine upon the ruins of my own. So you see," he sneered, "you needn't be so self-congratulatory on my account."

He hurt her, but she put the injury by.

"You think you could not only defeat them now, but help yourself, were you to repudiate the platform, bolt the ticket?" she inquired curiously.

"I ought to call upon them to pledge themselves to the Chicago platform, and, if they hesitated, to proclaim myself a better Republican than they, and walk out," he answered bluntly. "It would make me the Silver leader in Illinois."

"Then why don't you do it?" she challenged, in a generous flush, adding by way of caution—"only be sure, be sure!"

He walked a few steps to one side, then wheeled abruptly and came back softly over the grass, his countenance screwed up in a comical perplexity.

"I don't know why I don't," he drawled. "Ordinarily I'd be keen to take the leap, and hang the risk. But"—he looked sidelong at Mrs. Corlis, perhaps to gauge the compass of her credulity—"but maybe it is because I'd like to have the Senator, since he takes this reëlection so much to heart, get the benefit of any doubt there seems to be." He spoke slowly, and observed the least change in her face. "Formally, I'm bound; he has given me the letter of assurances I demanded. In reality that letter isn't worth the ink it's written in, I reckon. The Senator believes it, right enough, of course; but if that crowd he signs for haven't fixed it up already, they're only waiting till

they get into office to be up to some corporation deviltry or other."

He put his hands in his trousers pockets, let his head fall forward, and lifted himself on his toes repeatedly. He was length and leanness from the delicately intellectual head to the thin, long limbs.

"However," he continued, with one of his characteristic grins at his own expense, "I'd have a mighty hard time, I reckon, convincing the ordinary voter that my suspicions are correct. He won't damn his party's ticket ahead of time, not even with my word for it; he'd say I was crazy. Therefore, I reckon, generally speaking, Mrs. Corlis, your crowd has got the drop on me. I can't very well help keeping mum."

A growl of thunder came from the west and a preliminary pattering of rain assailed the treetops. The air was still motionless, but the clouds were piling more and more menacingly, and in the distance grain was waving and trees were tossing.

"I fancy we had better retreat into the house," said Mrs. Corlis, and led the way herself, her head drooping, and her eyes filled with speculation.

The Governor followed after, his lips puckering.

"It was a good bluff," he thought, "or was it all a bluff?" He himself, at that time, could not have clearly told.

XXXI

"I AM AN AMERICAN"

IN THE library, whither Mrs. Corlis returned, after going through the house to see if the windows were closed against the storm, the gloom increased. She seated herself in her father's working chair, one forearm on his desk, where her fingers played with a paper-knife, letting the blade slide one way and then another. Governor Ransom sat half across the room, his long legs curled impossibly underneath the chair and his slim back bent nearly double. What was clearly discernible, in the dim shaft of light entering from the window, was the lined and nervous face and the long, thin, wearied hands that clasped his temples.

"But this Silver," she resumed, endeavoring to ignore the tension of the electrified air, "tell me, I'd like to know, do you actually believe in it? Granted that it may produce a struggle with half the country, you, its zealous partisan, cannot fancy it will finally succeed. Even should you, yourself, become its prophet in the nation, the movement might nominate you, it never could develop force sufficient to carry you into the White House."

"You're right, I reckon," he admitted, without pause. "Though, for one, I am convinced it will grow so strong that it will rend asunder the old parties, or else revolutionize them. Across the Mississippi broods a tempest which the East ignores. The East is an ostrich."

Uncontented, she resumed,

"But I am trying to discover what is your real attitude. However far the movement may go, in the end it must defeat you, must it not, since it cannot succeed?"

"There would be a pretty struggle furnished, meantime," he rejoined, a flash in his dark eyes.

"Yes, but the fight for the fight's sake purely," she inquired, "would not compensate you for sure downfall and permanent retirement?"

"Why not?" The old perverse twist curled his lips.

Suddenly he dropped his hands from his face, sat bolt upright in his chair, and spoke out in a reckless fashion, that, at least, provided his pent-up self relief.

"The fact is, Mrs. Corlis, I'm in politics for excitement. I don't sleep nights, not as much as three hours, I reckon. I live on coffee and tobacco. What's the odds! There are more chances, more strain, more madness, more hopelessness, in leading a lost cause, in defying and in damning,

than in just jumping into some sure-thing band-wagon and tooting along with the other toots."

They laughed together at the paradox, she ripplingly, he in dry, almost silent, fashion. But the laughter hurt her.

"Sounds funny, I reckon," the Governor said grimly; "but there's a whole lot of truth in what I say."

She experienced impatience.

"But why must you think so futilely; why must you insist upon antagonism at every point?" she took him to task. "With your talents, your genius for politics, if you hate the money power, as you say, and dread the effect of corporations, why do you not devote yourself rationally to the extermination of corruption and the restoration of pure government?"

"You women always think in black and white," he snarled. "What you mean, I reckon, is you want me to be a reformer. And what's a reformer? In politics he is what a prig is in society; he demands an impossible, dull purity, and he has no instinct, even rudimentary, for the great practical issues, which, as they arise, align the parties and determine the destinies of the nation."

"Yet are we not wonderfully corrupt?" she ventured, uncertainly.

"Men want corruption," he retorted, as if with a sort of brutal delight in the truth. "Humph, I

never saw a reformer whose morality in office equaled what he had before he got in. He, no more than the practical politician, is proof against the temptation of helping his friends. What reformers really yearn for, is, not so much honesty, as having fellow-gentlemen for rulers, instead of coarse-mannered fellows. Yet, I reckon, in the sight of God, as in that of the people, there ain't a heap of difference between well-mannered fellows and coarse-mannered ones." And Ransom, in the utter weariness of cynicism, relapsed into a crouch again, and laid his cheeks in his hands.

The thunder shook the house and the rain swirled almost horizontally in sheets. The Governor arose to close the windows. Mrs. Corlis hardly noticed, so intent was she upon the realization of how hopeless was reply to a man in his humor, or to the specious fallacies he advanced. The room darkened yet more, and only the frequent lightning flashes lit it blindingly for seconds, showing the woman, still as a lay figure in her chair, and Ransom striding restlessly about, the tips of his fingers stuck in his hip pockets and his chin dropped into his shirt.

The storm abated somewhat, though the room did not lighten.

"But tell me," she bade, "is there no other way out of it for you? Must you attach yourself

to a false issue and go down, inevitably, in a spectacular defeat?"

Ransom halted in his narrow walk.

"There is something more," he said, softly, yet with a touch of grimness. "Silver may be an illusion, may be this or that; but it furnishes a good weapon. With it we will smite plutocracy, this plebeian wealth that poses and struts and is haughty. We will teach its pretentiousness a good lesson—take a fall out of it, as they say."

"Ah, that is the rub, then," she concluded, finely scornful. "I have learned at last. You resent this new superiority, because it overshadows your own; you would have your kind king, instead of it."

In the half light she saw him straighten and lift up his head. The taunt left him unstung; he replied, loftily,

"I am a democrat by philosophy and by morality. And I distrust caste, because the results of caste are want of sympathy, ignorance of what exists outside a class, and, hence, conscious or unconscious injustice and cruelty. The South had the true philosophy before the war; but its misfortune was to inherit, along with the doctrine of Jefferson, the institution of slavery."

He desisted from his high philosophizing and turned colloquial again and personal.

"Now, at the present, instead of slavery, it is you women who are spoiling democracy."

She retorted on the instant,

"I have heard, Governor, that it is you spoils politicians who are responsible for just that." Next moment she could have bitten her tongue out—was it the charged air that engendered spleen?

There came a green and yellow sheet of flame that showed, demoniacally, the distorted face of Ransom. Instantly followed the thunder, and the solid house quaked. Then, in the contrasting darkness, he said in a voice of suppressed passion,

"You know who made me what I am, Mrs. Corlis, and you are not the one to reproach me for having used politics as some men use whisky or cards. But," he paused, perhaps to restrain himself—"but, I may tell you that that influence, your influence, or whatever malign presence it was that worked for my destruction, is passed, or almost passed. Thank God, I have gotten back to my earliest ideals, those which I had when I was a country boy. I am an American. This Silver you deride furnishes the opportunity to demonstrate that I am such. Though it may sound like cant to your aristocratic ear, it is the truth. What America first stood for was equality of rights and opportunities, and the uplifting—as a poet of your New England, not of mine, has said—the uplift-

ing of the manhood of the poor. Millionaires threaten those ideals, aristocracy does, caste does, snobbery does. I am enlisted on the people's side in this fight, I reckon."

She was quivering; there was, then, as vaguely she had suspected, a spiritual meaning to the Silver movement, as well as the literal issue. Ransom, the soiled mercenary, was he preaching it?

"And women," she asked meekly, "you say we women are spoiling democracy?"

"Yes," he answered, savagely. "Most of you are incarnate aristocrats; your primary instinct is to show yourself superior to somebody else. You are gulled perpetually, taken in by the ribbons, the gauds, the pomps—by what Burke called 'the solemn plausibilities of this world.' You voice every pretension and absurdity; your ruling passion is to be exclusive."

"Oh, I know I have been frivolous," she interrupted, "but, pray, what else have I done?"

She was painfully conscious how shortly removed from the ridiculous the position was, yet she was genuinely contrite.

"Humph, I have no call to act as your confessor, Mrs. Corlis," he retorted brutally.

Spots glowed in both her cheeks, but she made no protest; she felt it was her due. He strode around the room again.

"All I say is, you women are building up in

every town of the United States, a structure called Society, made of sordid money, but crusted over with fantastic pretensions and cemented together by imported prejudices. By God, it would be side-splitting, if the consequences weren't so tragical."

The clouds abruptly broke apart and a burst of light flooded the room. The birds in the branches became a twittering, joyful chorus, and the thunder was faint in the far southeast.

She watched him from under puzzled brows, watched him as only women watch, to estimate the soul. Truly—she realized it with a thankful pang—he was beyond her influence now. He had attained some summit, though she might be uncertain what it was; she believed that, at last, he had entered into sincerity. And her heart was wrung for him; for she saw distinctly of what that pile was composed, whereon he now stood, not altogether firmly, but nevertheless, stood. His passions, which had been so fierce; his denunciations, which had been so bitter; his loneliness, which had been lifelong; his tortures, of that poignancy peculiar to intense, proud egotisms—one and all were under him at last and he was mounting.

"Think of it," Ransom mused aloud, "think of it—this great distinction of America, this sub-

lime ideal of the Republic, jeoparded by a horde of ignorant parvenus and a rabble of vulgar women!"

XXXII

THE QUESTION LEFT WITH MRS. CORLIS

THE dinner, served at four o'clock in order to allow Governor Ransom to catch his train, was a happy conclusion to the visit. The air, sparkling with ozone after the storm, entered by the doors and open windows and affected to gaiety the spirits of all of them.

There was no talk of politics at the table. The Governor himself was genial and humorous, his own mood cleared by his outburst. Senator Dawes, highly pleased with the results of the conference, exhibited the sincere affection he cherished in his heart for his former protégé and lieutenant. Mrs. Corlis, likewise, was engaging, rather sympathetically, however, than initiatively. But she was rejoiced, because she felt that she had made peace, at last, with Ransom, and because she was assured that he was not doomed to evil.

The talk and the speech, also, were characteristic. While Mrs. Corlis evinced her usual tolerance and masculinity, her accent and her idiom were those of the Eastern great world. Her father, here at his country home, had lapsed into the provincial tongue, and gave to high themes a

bucolic flavoring. As for the Governor, his phraseology was his own, peculiarly composed of remnants of his native Kentucky dialect, of Western colloquialisms, and of the slang of the day.

Both Senator and Governor were devoted to the classics in the old-fashioned, appreciative, uncritical way. If a solace of the Senator's was the reading of Homer and Virgil, that of the Governor was the study of Euripides and Lucretius; they united upon Horace. So, at the table, Latin epigram balanced Greek apothegm.

The Senator would say,

"You recall this line of Virgil, don't you, Randolph, my boy?"

And Ransom would reply,

"I reckon I do. How's this from The Medea? —Golly, they could write, those old ancients, couldn't they?"

A light buggy behind a big-limbed horse, with the stableman to drive it, stood at the front door, to take the Governor six miles across country to catch a train that would set him down in Springfield by midnight.

Senator Dawes clasped the hand of the younger man in both his own.

"Randolph, my boy, I thank you; you have saved me.—And—if there's any nigger in the wood-pile, you have my promise."

"My last word, Senator," Ransom replied, "I

am mighty glad we found a basis of agreement; for I want to give you my support, personally, every time I can."

He turned to Mrs. Corlis.

"You will excuse my vehemence, I reckon." The perverse lips quivered just a bit. "We are friends?"

In reply she looked into his eyes steadily, her soul in hers.

"We women cannot always see as you men see; but from the bottom of my heart I believe in you, Randolph Ransom."

He gave no answer save a single look. He bowed to the Senator and stepped into the buggy. At the turn among the trees he looked back, waving his hat. Then Mrs. Corlis, watching wistfully, saw him turn to the driver with a friendly grin and offer him tobacco from a silver box. That was Ransom exactly, she thought.

Later in the evening, while Mrs. Corlis lay dreaming in the porch, the Senator joined her from the library.

"It come out better than I expected, Vicky. Of course, I felt that Ransom would do all he could for me, and I saw that he was sorry for the old back-number,—that's what they call me, nowadays. But he's so good a hater, Randolph is, and it came out so strongly in the Convention,

that I was scared to death I couldn't do anything with him."

"What has he agreed to, Pater?" she inquired, absently, her real mind far away. "He told me you and he had come to some sort of understanding."

The Senator hummed and hawed a bit.

"Ransom has promised to stay out of the fight and inside the party; that is, he'll sulk in his tent—take it out in sulking at the most. In return he required me to assure him, which I did, that there exists no corporation deal, or the like, behind your husband's nomination."

Her ear took in the form of words, which her brain registered; but their significance, somehow, appeared to her only weeks afterward, when circumstances called them from the storage of her memory.

The Senator rubbed his hands.

"Good news for us to take up to Chicago tomorrow with us, isn't it? It's calculated to relieve a few apprehensions, I guess. Your old daddy, Vicky, is going to die in the Senate, sure—his obituaries will read Senator, not former-Senator Simeon E. Dawes."

"I am so glad," she said and slipped a hand into his. Quite a while afterwards she asked,

"Pater, do you think Governor Ransom really sincere in his mania about Silver?"

Senator Dawes considered.

"I will answer this way," he said at length. "Ransom is past-master in practical politics, the best of his kind, at least in Illinois. He forecasts the future and then organizes to win. In all his talk with me he did not so much as concern himself with the arguments about the merits or the fallacies of Free Silver. What absorbs his interest is how the signs signify a rising tide for Silver and how the conditions everywhere are ripe for a great popular upheaval, with this question to the fore."

"Singular, isn't it?" she remarked.

"Oh, Randolph is no statesman; but he is a wonderful man, nevertheless. And he possesses not only strong qualities, but virtues that are none too common. He has loyalty and gratitude. He believes, of course, in doing in Rome as the Romans do, and generally he goes the Romans one better to boot. And what he respects, I suppose, wouldn't supply a moral outfit for even McBride. But he can stick to a friend in a way that warms the heart to see, and his word is better than any man's I know." Darkness veiled their faces, so that the Senator ventured, "Sometimes I have thought if Ransom had married a woman of character and mind, he would have avoided a good deal that prejudices his career."

Again, after a time, Mrs. Corlis inquired,

"But, Pater, do you think that he may be right and that we are actually on the brink of a political overturning?"

"How should I know?" he replied, with a suspicion of petulance. "I am an old man, concerned alone about getting sent back to Washington. Randolph is marvelously acute, and, it is true, America is a very different proposition from what it was when I was young. Can an old man estimate new forces?"

After the Senator had returned to the library, Mrs. Corlis remained, as she had done the night before, a long time in the porch. She thought of Ransom. She confessed the revelation of the man's high endeavor had surprised her; yet, she reflected, she ought not to have been surprised, since he had always, in her experience, been actuated by better motives than he professed.

Did the revelation do nothing more than surprise her? Did it not inflict on her some shame? The question intruded itself suddenly. If Ransom were not the mere politician he was accredited with being, was not her responsibility in influencing his course and turning him aside, vastly altered? To induce a spoilsman to postpone his personal wrath, was one thing; to require a sincere man to abandon his ideals for her sake, was another.

What Ransom's glance had told her was, "I profess to subordinate my interests, or my passions,

to the friendship I bear your father; but in reality it is because you ask it of me. And I understand your motive—for your father, yes, but also for your husband."

Was she over-sensitive, or had she, indeed, read that knowledge in his eyes? She was not sure. She may have misread his eyes, or imputed to them her own thought; but her knowledge of his nature was more sure. It would be like him to disdain to admit, even by a glance, that he was capable of an act of such chivalry; nevertheless it would be like him, also, to perform it.

The more she considered the matter, the more she was convinced of its probability. For it was not to be supposed that Ransom's perception had failed to compass her entire motive.

XXXIII

DEMOCRACY

THE next morning, two hours before the train for Chicago went through, Mrs. Corlis sallied out for a last walk with the dogs. She went across the fields to a knoll that she knew. When she had reached its summit, the countryside for many a mile lay stretched out beneath her eye. It was the region in which her father's father had first settled, where her father himself had been born, while in the house just below most of her own childhood had been spent. It was her own land, indeed, and the land of the people from whom she had inherited.

Her grandfather she had never seen, but her father had told her so much, in detail, about him, that the quaint personality was as familiar to her as many that lived. He had been an itinerant peddler of books and pamphlets, and, for all else besides, a dreamer. He pushed his two-wheel cart for years about the state, sleeping at the farm-houses on his way, and discoursing a homely philosophy to whoever consented to hear. He had believed in simplicity and in the soul, in all men and in democracy. And though his son had often

in his boyhood been "hard put to it for victuals to put into his mouth," the memory of the father was revered by that son.

As the latter was fond of observing to his daughter,

"Your grandfather, Vicky, had the heart of a child, the hardihood of a stoic and the mind of a sage. He barely earned a living all his life, but he was a great man in my estimation. When men grow wise, they will seek for such a man, and, when they find him, they will make him ruler, as the Romans made Marcus Aurelius emperor."

Standing on the knoll, that morning of June, Mrs. Corlis' thoughts reverted to that simple man. Then followed musings on her own father's life: Out of what lowliness he had arisen, what keen struggles he had had, how his career exemplified the possibilities America contains for any man.

Three generations—her grandfather, her father, and herself—did they not illustrate the American progression? And she was the thriftless lily blooming at the height of that wholesome stem; to produce her, simple working lives of use and merit had been lived; but she passed, restlessly, a luxurious existence, and possessed more wealth and power than an English duchess. What an unfolding in that short span!—Was it development or degeneration?

Was she a great lady in reality? Mrs. Corlis asked herself. Had she attained the feudal sentiments to match the feudal station her money had thrust upon her? Did she at heart believe that the many were born to work for the few, and the few to set for the many a fair copy of manners and refinement, besides generally enjoying themselves?

She pressed the questions home relentlessly, as if such speculation could ease heartache. She asked in conclusion: Could she rationally subscribe to this latter-day doctrine, the unavowed belief of the millionaires, the secret creed of her own husband? To subscribe, would not that be to repudiate her own, to admit the inferiority of her own breed, to deny them the capacity for the finer sentiments and superior qualities? Yet, if such were the truth, how came it that she herself was differentiated from the stock which had produced her? Nay, to what were due her honors, her precedence, her place? Why was she lauded as an aristocrat and a distinguished personage? Was it not the deference due the money and achievements of her uncle and father that resulted for her in so much homage and so much flattery? Yet their strength, whose fruitage she enjoyed, had been born of the common people, though society affected to laud her select quality.

The great lady honored labor, in her soul she

honored it. Honor of labor was original in her New England blood, and she reverted to her primal faiths in these, her last days, when she had clear sight. Money, adulation, the affectation of her generation, the influence of a vain-glorious mate, had conquered outwardly, given her the semblance, especially at times, of a complete worldliness. But Cromwellian blood ran in her veins; the ideals of John Milton, those upon which the New England of her fathers had been builded, were of her inheritance.

As she looked, for the last time in her life, across those familiar fields, Mrs. Corlis remembered yet again those words of Chris Ruggles as to what constituted the heroic struggle—how he only was a knight who had borne arms in the heat of common day and toiled his share in the sordid struggle of the world to make a living. None of her people, she fervently thanked God, had been parasites, except herself. They had been real, had been absorbed in the work and care and pain which is the natural life of man, as contrasted with that life she knew of the protected class, who nurse the passions proudly and are blown with swollen egotisms and blinded with the superstitions of superiority.

And like a revelation, renewed with force, there was borne in upon her the pathos and sublimity of Democracy, the tragic beauty of the epic of the People.

XXXIV

THE NEW METHOD

THE State Central Committee, publicly in charge of the Republican campaign, had its headquarters in the Great Northern Hotel. The Executive Committee of the State Central Committee set up its headquarters a block away in the Grand Pacific Hotel. The latter headquarters were not so ostentatiously open to the public as were the former.

The committees gave no evidence of being "hard up," although to be in desperate need of ready cash is characteristic of campaign committees at the opening of hostilities. In fact, an opulent atmosphere pervaded both headquarters, and even warmed the adjacent halls. The committeemen themselves wore sleek smiles, nor did they worry any one with a narrative of their anxieties. Politicians who called, departed with a satisfied smile, which order of smile reproduced itself and spread, with surprising quickness, throughout the fraternity all over the state. The word passed down the line: Of "sinews of war" there was to be no lack; some one's fat barrel was "on tap;" "the boys" would be "made happy." The cam-

paign was to be none of your moral issues, waged with palaver and at starvation wages; each "legitimate" requisition would be promptly honored at headquarters, and no expense would be spared to elect the ticket from top to bottom.

All over the state arose the sound of hammers tapping rivets. The machine was being overhauled and recoppered, and whoever could furnish a modicum of skill in the business was promised recognition after election; moreover, he got "good money down" for "immediate expenses" plus such a commission for himself as his conscience or his prudence would allow him to deduct. Each "worker" looked to it that his particular cog was clean, ready to fit accurately into other cogs, when the whole complexity should be set going. "Clatter," it was declared, must be reduced to a minimum by unstinted applications of "oil;" joints, pistons, shafts, wheels within wheels, gear of every kind, must be found capable of running like an engine of velvet and steel.

For the powers had determined it was to be a "silent" campaign. Smooth men were the men wanted, smooth methods the sole ones to be employed. Oratory was to be discredited, along with brass-bands, barbecues, processions, and other noise-provoking agencies. "Personal persuasion personally applied" was the text preached to "the workers." Dialogue always was to be preferred;

"button-hole" communications, "heart-to-heart" talks, "green-back plastering," all quiet and effectual expedients were recommended by headquarters, and put in practice by "the workers."

Another admonition: discussion must be avoided. Let the Democrats do the talking. Answer never a word. Their plethora of speech will defile their own faces, as if they spat against the wind. Their fury of vituperation must find no echo, even, and consequently will sound hollow. Organization pitted against fanatical enthusiasm; mole-burrowing, against popular rant; mastery of detail, against passionate appeal: such was the authoritative program.

Who planned this method of campaign? Whose barrel was on tap, from which flowed the oil, plentifully, to render the machinery pliant and the friction *nil?* Some said it was the head of Boss McBride, whoever else's pocket-book it might be. Other wise ones averred that if McBride were "trying it on" the state the same way he had "tried it on" the city, he would wake in November "to find out his mistake." Yet many even of these critics soon ceased to criticise and developed fat smiles instead.

Behind the State Central Committee and even behind the Executive Committee, who published orders and filled requisitions, a final authority existed. That fact the committees realized within

twenty-four hours after "opening up for business;" they shrewdly perceived that their function in this campaign was limited to registering the decrees of a secret committee. They succumbed without a protest; in truth, they were delighted. To secure a competent Czar who commands some one's money-bags, is the highest aspiration of the machine in a campaign—an aspiration not always gratified. The unanimous yearning is for a leader competent to conduct them into Canaan.

The new method of campaign was well inaugurated by the time Senator Dawes and his daughter returned from Primrose Hill. The word that Ransom was "gagged" solidified the satisfaction of Corlis and McBride; they agreed that success was guaranteed now, and they were disposed to resent the Senator's curiosity concerning the plans for the fall.

"Before I go back to Washington," said he, "I should like to be made acquainted with what you expect of me in the active weeks of September and October. Congress will not adjourn till the middle of August, I'm afraid, and I want to see if I can get any vacation before I go on the stump."

The request plainly irritated Corlis, but the Senator persisted. He had claims, moreover, which even his masterful son-in-law must respect.

It was he who had "managed" the obstreperous Governor, and, if he insisted, he must be humored.

The Senator frankly stated his criticism of the plan, when, in conference with Corlis and McBride, it was submitted to his judgment.

"But we don't propose to allow the speakers to emasculate our game," Corlis interrupted, with a slight show of asperity. "Speakers can't make the mistakes you speak of, if they don't speak."

"What do you mean?" asked "Uncle Simeon," amazedly.

Corlis shrugged his shoulders. The old man drew himself up.

"I have been forty years in politics; I have helped elect six governors, been elected twice myself. I guess I can claim to know a little how it's done. And I tell you,"—he brought down his fist into the palm of his other hand—"the people expect to have the issues presented to them from the platform as usual. They'd think it almighty queer, if they weren't."

"Oh," replied Corlis, with an amused and deprecatory smile, "you'll find this is a campaign of modern methods, Senator. We are reaching the voters by print; we have plastered every acre of the state with 'literature.' We find tracts and documents do all the work, and do it silently. The danger about too much speechmaking is that it excites discussion instead of spreading conviction.

My idea is that oratory should be used in the very last two weeks to confirm the enthusiasm previously prepared by the methods we are using now. Of course, Senator, you will be expected to make four or five speeches, but not until October, I should say."

The Senator had listened to this elucidation without looking up; now he turned to McBride, calmly omitting his son-in-law.

" Mr. McBride, I have no doubt of the wisdom and efficiency of the committee, or of the comprehensiveness of the plans you have arranged. But there will be more to do. The Democrats have declared for Free Silver and nominated a popular German. If Governor Ransom has shown himself amenable to the influence I could bring to bear, all his friends have not, and they will not. Organization is a good thing; literature is; so is money; but talk, and plenty of it, will be imperative this fall. I know what I am talking about; I've seen the developments of many a campaign. You must prepare to face the Democracy upon the stump; you must answer their speakers. You two don't deal in ideas—you may not think there's any danger in an idea—but an idea left to itself sprouts like an old potato in a cellar. I cannot consent to let this campaign remain entirely a still-hunt. Understand me, gentlemen."

He drew himself up to his full height and threw back his head. He meant to impose his dignity upon these practical men, as at times he did on delegations and committees who visited him in Washington. He looked, in a way, Websterian.

"There's no use in getting grandiloquent," interposed Corlis, with polite disdain. "We've arranged to have you make six speeches, at least, in upper Illinois, and, for my part, you can make six more, if you like, anywhere you like."

Hereupon, to Corlis' surprise, the Boss spoke up.

"I'm of one mind with the Senator, I'm thinkin'. What you say, sir, is sense." Little twists of his vast body emphasized his temporary revolt. "Corlis is all right; he's a first-class organizer, and that's so. But he's a business man in politics and he ain't had our experience, Senator. That's why he don't recognize these here little fine points in the game like we do, you and me, Senator. What we want, Corlis, is the advice of a true statesman as to how to run this here campaign, and I plunk for what the Senator says—he knows." He snapped a big thumb and finger, if not literally in his colleague's face, yet there in intent. "You lay down what line of argument the people'll want this fall, and we'll go by it, Senator, and you make out your own itinerancy"—he rolled forth the

grand word—" and speak accordin' to the dictates of your own conscience. We'll stand for it, I'll be damned if we won't."

Corlis was masterful, but he never expostulated. He had learned, early in life, that there were more ways than one to any end, but no way at all if one's temper went. Being out-voted, he acquiesced; but he resolved that his father-in-law's appearance on the platform that fall would, nevertheless, be no more than a perfunctory performance.

Later he took occasion mildly to remonstrate with McBride for humoring " the old gentleman's obsolete prejudices." Said he,

" The Senator is hopelessly behind the times; his sole idea of political management is to argue. But he is gradually finding out his dear ' peepul ' are extinct, and that what practical men, like you and I, are after is results, not vaudeville. Your backing him only tends to get his senile obstinacy up."

But again McBride surprised his colleague; perhaps he surprised himself.

" There's such a thing as a decent respect," he rejoined. " The Senator was in politics when you and me was kids. His opinion is worth hearin', and I ain't a-goin' to have his feelin's hurt."

" Turned sentimental, have you, McBride? " Mr. Corlis smiled good-naturedly.

"That's my bizness," growled the Boss.

Corlis knew when to refrain from irritating a bear.

XXXV

THE OLD INFLUENCE

IF I am not the inventor of the use of literature in a campaign, I am the man who has developed its practical possibilities. In fact, I have revolutionized the business of carrying an election. McBride and your father's friends, whom you had here to breakfast, you remember, sneered at first and would like to have opposed. But I had my way. I generally have my way—without any bluster or commotion either—and they've all come around to my methods now, except, perhaps, the Senator. Victoria, after I've won this first fight, when I am governor, my next move, you will see, will be on Washington, where I mean to drive a team of reformers and practical politicians under the same yoke down Pennsylvania Avenue. Would not our friend, Arthur Hillis Collar, and your admirer, Boss McBride, compose a spanking team? The lamb and the lion—but they shall not lie down, they shall pull together, and pull me."

Thus Candidate Corlis, indulging his vanity in the *penetralia* of his home, delivered himself to his wife, vaunting how, while she was down at

Primrose Hill, he had become in reality, though not in name, his own manager.

The enthusiasm, however, with which his wife was accustomed to respond, was absent in this instance. His failure to evoke it caused him astonishment and then chagrin. He felt left in the air, so to speak. Therefore he remarked with asperity,

"Ordinary affairs seem to possess slight interest for you after Primrose Hill. No doubt you experienced plenty of melodrama with your Governor."

"You are supercilious," she returned, gazing at him with eyes from which the dream had not totally departed. "It—it is rather common to be so—is it not?" she added a bit loftily.

"You found Ransom not common, I suppose," he sneered. "He played the hero like an actor, and with his bombast and his attitudes succeeded in imposing on your imagination, it appears. You always were easy on the sentimental side, Victoria."

She looked across the dinner table at her husband's handsome, contemptuous countenance—looked down from the height of her mind.

"Governor Ransom is a very noble gentleman," she testified.

Mr. Corlis was infuriated.

"An instance of early romanticism revived, isn't it?" he scoffed.

"What?" she asked, so engrossed with her own thought that a moment was required before the words penetrated to her consciousness. She arose majestically. "Your insinuation is unworthy of you, Walter Corlis, and it does injustice to the devotion my life has been to yours."

He bent his attention to his knife and fork, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, come down to earth, Victoria. You've been so high-pitched since you returned, that it's a wonder you speak to me in anything short of blank verse."

She swept from the room; but Mr. Corlis finished dinner. Before he had done, however, he adjudged himself a fool, telling himself he had acted like a young man with nerves.

"Hang her mystic visions and her high-tragedy airs," he swore in his mind; "they'd irritate a saint. And she's had 'em hard ever since she came home. Humph, Ransom must have laid himself out to be agreeable, damn him!"

The upshot was that Mr. Corlis actually took the pains to be jealous on his wife's account. It was impossible for him to have felt jealousy for her as a woman, but he was in the habit of monopolizing her mind and he resented heatedly this usurpation of some portion of it by another.

Mrs. Corlis, by that grace of magnanimity she had in such abundance, kept their next meeting free even from the consciousness that there had been so much as a misunderstanding. She went even a step in his direction—to make amends she allowed herself to be drawn back, or appear to be drawn back, into the circle of his influence. She accepted the effort he displayed to regain her favor and to rekindle her interest. If a subtle difference remained, if the old wistful, ill-suppressed appeal no longer inhabited the eyes she turned to him, yet she still could manifest her pleasure in his companionship, and could attest her faith in the greatness of his destiny.

On his side, slighted egotism pricked him on to the reconquest of her mind, and the evidence that after all she remained so much to him, she found dear. His superficial excellences were so undoubted—his superiority of body and his individual charm. He knew the world so well and could be so diverting when he chose. To have all these qualities engaged in the endeavor to please her, to win her back, her vanity found delicious, her woman's love found irresistible.

Gradually he converted her to his worship again. Again he demonstrated to the intellect with which in a man's sense she was endowed, that after all his sort of a man, the man he was, was the man of the time. He showed her his dom-

inance of the committees, his seizure of the whole management of the campaign, his new grip upon the party leadership.

He was much too clever to depreciate directly the abilities of Governor Ransom. But, just as formerly he had contrived to instil into her mind a doubt of the intellectual stature and even of the granitic integrity of the Senator, her father, so now he succeeded in obscuring largely her newly discovered esteem of Ransom's quality. Mr. Corlis was ever girding smartly at sentimentalists and the oratorical temperament; he was continually contrasting the leadership of the Napoleonic or Bismarckian type with that of the character of Gladstone or of Sumner.

Meantime Mrs. Corlis had resumed her secondary interests, interrupted by the sojourn at Primrose Hill, in both the McBrides and in Christopher Ruggles. In accordance with the resolution she had formed, she called every week upon Mrs. McBride and seemed inclined to push the acquaintance into intimacy. Naturally, observers ascribed the move to politics, but Gretchen herself knew better.

Likewise Mrs. Corlis did what she could for Ruggles. She invited him often to luncheon and she assiduously drew out from him his views.

One day she said to him,

"Chris, I met Miss Hildegarde Brown at the

McBrides' yesterday afternoon; I had not seen her since the Convention time. She has a large outlook, I fancy. She isn't consumed with the pettiness of things like the most of us women—large interests concern her."

"She is concerned with them successfully too," the reporter not a little proudly said. "She will make twenty thousand dollars or more this year, and though she is inclined to think it a disgrace to be rich, she admits she'll have hard work avoiding the disgrace before she dies."

Mrs. Corlis did not smile at what in Ruggles was decided humor; she was intent upon her point.

"Money will not suffice to make her happy, Chris—she needs more than money; all we women, who are true women, do. There's heart hunger in her eyes.—I want you, Chris, to marry her."

He reddened, gasped.

"I? Why I—I can hardly take care of myself as it is."

"She loves you, Chris."

"No, no, you can't know that!"

"Her face thirsts, Chris. She is not happy with herself; her life, successful as it is, does not suit her. You know, you must know, Chris, she cares."

"She is my best friend on earth; she has helped me more than anyone ever did," confessed Rug-

gles, in a burst. "When—when I was hopeless, she got me my place on *The Pundit*.—She saved me."

"Then, Chris, for gratitude do what you alone can do—make her happy. Besides, it's not all zeal in her behalf; for I should feel so safe about you, if I knew she were your wife."

The consideration did not appeal favorably to Ruggles.

"You think it would be a wise move for an impracticable dreamer like me. No doubt I should be safer. It might be rather hard on her, though."

Mrs. Corlis relinquished that method of attack.

"It could not be bad for you, of course; but, to tell the truth, Chris, it is not you I am thinking of, so much as the poor girl herself. She is made of splendid stuff, we know, and she'll not whimper; but her face haunts me. I feel as if she lived with loneliness as her familiar and that she loathed it.

"Suppose she does make twenty thousand to your one; did you never think that a woman can be wronged by her own wealth?"

"That is the way an adventurer would reason," excepted Ruggles.

"Chris, don't pose to yourself—your worst enemy would not suspect you of being one. That would be ridiculous." She affected sharpness. "You know whether you love her, do you not?"

He hung a sheepish head.

"No, I can't say exactly that I do, Mrs. Corlis."

Her missionary zeal was becoming rapidly mixed with humorous appreciation.

"Chris, you are impossible," she exclaimed. "Come, as the politicians say, get off the fence; get down on one side or the other. Can you not decide, for once, as any man with a tenth of your mind could do?"

"Indeed, I wish I could, Mrs. Corlis; that is just exactly what I've wanted to do all my life."

His serious concern was comical.

"Oh, Chris, do try, for once do try; it will do you good, and relieve other people." She admonished her protégé strictly, though she could not help smiling.

The Boss had reached home the night before to find Hildegarde Brown with his wife. The first thing he learned from them was the marvelous news that Mrs. Corlis had called that afternoon.

"And I was so glad," declared Gretchen, "Gard was here to see her; and how kind and sweet she is."

"Well, she can afford to be," said Gard. "There's nothing much to ruffle her temper, I guess."

The Boss sent a shrewd glance in her direction.

"You ain't forgiven her yet for bein' the missus of Mr. Corlis, are you, Gard?" he said.

"No, I'm not, I might as well own up," Gard laughed, in her explosive way.

"She can't help him, Mrs. Corlis can't," Gretchen pouted. "Suppose he is stuck-up—Mrs. Corlis ain't one bit so, Gard."

"Oh, I'm willing to do the woman justice," Gard rejoined. "Only I reserve my right not to like her style."

"Certain," acquiesced McBride. "But Mrs. Corlis, Gard, is a fine lady all the same.—Wife, bring Gard and me some beer. Gard, sit down at the table 'longside me and we'll indulge ourselves in a little talk."

Gard proceeded to inquire of the Boss about the progress of the campaign.

"Looks well, looks well," McBride replied. "We're goin' to slip the whole length of the ticket through as easy as they fill a sausage out in Packingtown—unless—" the Boss laid a finger against his nose, "something unexpected trips us up beforehand."

"Is Mr. Corlis as confident as you?"

"Dead certain sure—too much so to suit me, Gard. I've seen the tide turn tail at the end of the last moment, after you'd quit suspectin' it entirely. But Corlis, he won't listen, and the chances favor his way of thinkin'. The state ain't never been so

canvassed and platted out and nailed down, as Corlis and me have done to it this time. But the feller who can tell how a woman's goin' to jump, he's so cunnin', is the feller who can make money on his election bets. I ain't that man."

"Mr. Corlis is making no mistakes, is he, McBride?"

"Not that I'm on to, Gard. Corlis is a fine manager all right, there ain't no denyin' that; but God Almighty's self has got no walkaway in the election business, now I'm tellin' you."

"He'll win though, won't he—he will be Governor?" she asked, as if challenging the Boss to a denial.

"That ain't what's worrying me," confessed McBride. "Let him. What I want to know is how he's goin' to feel towards me after he gets set up at Springfield. Corlis is mighty smart, some too much so to suit my taste entirely. There's just one trouble with these smart fellers, I've observed; generally they're certain sure the other feller is a fool. That's where Corlis'll fall down, if he's a-goin' to."

"Why, is he giving himself airs over you any, McBride?"

"Can hardly say that, Gard. But there's a mighty cold film in his eyes that I don't like entirely—damn his eyes!" suddenly burst out the Boss half in a fury. "Corlis thinks he's got me

where the hair's short and that now I've got to see him through. But I'll show—I'll show him, if he tries to monkey with me and the organization. He can't throw us in the air after the election, if that's his game."

"Depend upon it, that is his game," asserted Gard. She spoke intensely. "Governor Corlis won't know you down at Springfield any more than he can help. The silk-stockings and the reformers will be dear to him, not a city Boss with a reputation, like you."

McBride's plethoric veins had swollen under the instigation of the idea of such treachery; but he controlled himself. One hand waved off Gard.

"I won't listen to you; you'll have me prejudiced entirely. I want to make sure for myself, and you hate him, Gard, I don't know why, but you hate him fit to kill."

She flushed desperately and rose from the table.

"I must go, Gretchen," she said. She would not stay to dinner or all night, as Mrs. McBride entreated her to do. But at the door she called back to the Boss,

"All the same, McBride, you aren't made up in your own mind whether you want to see him governor or not."

"I ain't sure, that's right," replied the Boss. "But sh—; just now he has me where the hair's short, Corlis has.—Here's hopin' for a change."

XXXVI

NO BETTER THAN HER WORLD

HILDEGARDE BROWN looked up from the paper she had been considering. Two vertical lines made clefts between her brows and the chiseled lips drew keen and clear. Her aquilinities seemed all accentuated, so that what was not intelligence was will. The face was a sword's edge.

Her gray eyes, through the wide window at her side, looked across the broken uplands of roof and wall, through which, at a depth, runs La Salle street, the Wall Street of the West. It gave direction to her thoughts.

"I know well what you are," her mind addressed the temples of finance. "You can't fool me. I know all your tricks and lies, and that there's hardly an honest man from end to end of you. And I haven't much respect for you. All you think of is results—you're all American."

"But am I different?" she asked herself presently. "Why should I be? The air I breathe has circulated in your lungs, and what I am, you've made me. Why should I, indeed, be any more scrupulous than I've been taught? It don't

pay to be too nice; it only pays the other fellow, the one that's looking for results. Skin or be skinned, that is the law. It's up to me to choose."

She swung her chair half round, so that her glance encountered the campaign lithograph tacked upon the wall. She had had it put up to please McBride and to mortify herself. The likeness it displayed was entitled: "For Governor, Walter H. D. Corlis of Cook."

She could not face it directly, but looked at it askance between lids a little closed. She scrutinized it a long time, however, and the muscles of her face hardened even more. If she had been iron, now she became steel.

"Yes, he is distinguished, even in that cheap and gaudy process," she concluded. "To look at it, merely, would convince one that he is a great man. But *I* know better; I know him too well. He's spurious, only a clever devil."

She eyed the lithograph hostilely still awhile. Then suddenly she wheeled around to her open desk.

"I'll do it, I swear I will; I'll fix him; hang the scruples! Do you fight the devil with holy water, or set a preacher to catch a thief?"

She rang the bell and an office boy came in.

"Telephone the *Pundit* office I want to see Mr. Christopher Ruggles the moment he comes in. Get a move on about it."

The campaign had not entered the period dubbed " the home stretch " as yet, but that time was opening just before the runners. Its stress would test utterly the work of preparation by both parties. Apparently the silent tactics of Corlis and McBride had proved efficacious. If Silver seethed down in Egypt, the commotion seemed bottled up completely in that territory. Elsewhere was little discussion and no enthusiasm. Governor Ransom sat in the Executive Mansion in Springfield, and since his memorable defiance of the Convention had not once opened his mouth. The election seemed likely to go Republican by default; W. H. D. Corlis seemed assured of becoming governor. He would not " sweep " the state or excite much enthusiasm; but he bade fair to be " put in " by a safe plurality, and a good game of politics, such as politicians love, close, scientific, and dealt beneath the table, would have been played.

Gard was of pure Yankee stock; thence her composition of such opposites as nerves and steel. Her forebears shared, no doubt, in that dubious heritage, the far-famed conscience of New England; but she had sloughed off, at least, its sickly parasites, cant and pharisaism. The West had cradled her; Chicago had been her education; her wits had been filed upon La Salle street, and so had her scruples, too. She was courageous, no-

ble, generous, and when her ends were not the best, she thoroughly thought them so. But no cheap sentimentalism hindered her making a good fight, and as she was a loyal friend, so was she a whole-hearted foe. In truth, she was nobly an unconscious pagan in her way, nor had the slightest breath of degeneration so much as tarnished the brightness of her metal.

"Chris," she said, enthusiastically, with dilating eyes, "sit down. It's something important. How would you like a great 'scoop,' the greatest ever was, that'll make the town howl and set Illinois by the ears?"

"I'd like it, of course," replied Ruggles, with what violent animation may be expected of a man all of whose enthusiasms are abstract. "Tell me what it is."

"Just this. Read this." She handed him some typewritten sheets. "It's a copy. Read or don't, as you choose. You don't need to. All you need is just to take it to MacPherson and your fortune's made, so far as *The Pundit* goes."

Ruggles glanced through the opening paragraph and his face lengthened. Then he shifted the sheets hastily.

"Guess I'll read it," he muttered, and settled himself.

Gard watched him intently as he read, in order

to anticipate the effects of the revelation, if she could.

At the end he looked up, nonplussed; there was a mixture of amazement and incredulity in his expression.

"I don't understand what you mean exactly," he began, slowly. "Of course, I was aware that something was going on in your office here, I've run across Mr. Corlis and the Boss here so often. But," he struck the papers with the backs of his fingers, "I had no idea of this. Is it really true?"

"Yes," she answered simply. She was still watching his face.

He hesitated.

"Well, if it's so," he said, at last, "it's the most criminal thing I ever heard of. Why, Gard, do you realize what it is? It's a scheme to rob the city, to steal from the people, to secure for a song the rights of generations yet unborn."

The indignation of a slow man was boiling up in him; yet commonly he was too deeply fixed in his own abstractions, or else too far disillusioned, to be stirred up much.

"I thought you'd see it so," commented Gard, drily, a little smile of satisfaction appearing round her lips. "You see too, don't you, how we can prevent it? It lies in our power; we can stop the robbery."

Gradual enlightenment dawned in Ruggles' eyes.

"Oh, I see," he said, and unconsciously his voice chilled, "you want me to take these to the editor." He shook the sheets in his hand.

"Of course you'll do it," challenged Gard. "It will be the greatest 'scoop' for you the old *Pundit* ever had."

Ruggles was looking hard at her, in his turn.

"Gard, do you mean it?" Amazement, not suspicion, cried out in him. "You haven't thought—how could you answer for it to Boss McBride?"

Gard killed the scruple with a smile.

"I wouldn't answer, you goose; I'd just go and get it done."

"You can't mean McBride wants it done?" gasped Chris. "He hasn't secretly put you up to it, has he? Why, Gard, if this were published it would rip up the state."

"I know it, and that's why it's going to be done," explained Gard, rather loftily. "I know exactly what I'm up to, and it's what I want. Your story in *The Pundit* will start Governor Ransom to his feet as if a bunch of fire-crackers were being set off under him. It will about do up Corlis. In fact, all that's wanted to make things interesting's a bombshell, and I guess this thing is it."

Ruggles had some vague notion of how he would like to allow himself to be carried off his feet. The animation of her face, the blue fire of her eyes, were beautiful. But it was his habit to split hairs, to weigh nicely both intellectual and moral grains.

"But Gard," he dissented, "the question is not what splendid effect it would produce, but whether you have the right to produce it."

"Most grave and reverend seignior," mocked Gard.

Perforce he smiled, but persisted.

"That's it, nevertheless; you can't get round it. It looks so queer. Has McBride authorized you to spring this?"

She was upon her restless feet.

"What business is that of yours, Chris?" she blazed. "I give you a chance to make a stupendous scoop and you balk, you introduce your confounded scruples."

"Oh, you know better, Gard," he interposed. "I only want you should see clearly what you propose to do. I couldn't let you do for me, on my account, what—"

"It's not on your account, you goose." She stamped a foot. "You're such a prig, Chris Ruggles. Besides, it is not your business what I do—you're not the keeper of my conscience."

"Gard," he exclaimed, reproachfully, and gave her a look.

It shook her, but not from her purpose.

"This isn't sentiment, it's business; so you'll please cut the former out," she announced. "You are given the opportunity, it's up to you. Don't go behind the returns! So will you, or won't you —that's the question?"

"But why do you want to do it?" Ruggles strove. "The McBrides are your best friends, and, whatever the Boss may be, he is straight with you."

"It's a case where my public duty overrides my private obligations," jeered Gard.

He looked up, expecting to behold the evil in her face; instead he saw but intelligence, naked as a blade.

"I'll tell you," suddenly she cried, answering his look. "Do you see that campaign poster? You see the picture, that cold-eyed devil! Well, I hate him, and I hate him! And he will be governor unless he's stopped. And if he isn't stopped right now, he may be anything, senator, president, the top of all. And *I* can stop him; I have the power; it's in these papers. Do you suppose I hesitate, because it may prevent McBride from stealing another million? Well, not much! McBride don't need tender treatment, he can take

care of himself. But that man there, I'll stop him at any cost! He never shall be governor!"

Gard towered over Chris like some tall, golden shield-maiden. The hesitater felt her ascendency and admired—admired her audacity, her unscrupulousness—and the Hamlet soul of him averred that to be able so to act without feeling the oppression of responsibility, but with the whole nature bearing upon one point, was life itself, was individuality.

Yet, according to his nature, he demurred.

"I don't half like it, Gard. I know this scheme is one of fraud and plunder; but it's Jesuitical to suppose the fact would justify us. The best way, I'm sure, is to leave evil-doers to come to their own end; the punishment will fall, sooner or later."

"Later, generally," said Gard. She laughed out: "Oh, you are so droll, so old-fashioned, Chris!" Her mirth did not exclude a tenderness, akin to a maternal condescension. "Why, don't you know that nowadays the wicked flourish like green bay trees? No, no, I am not going to entice you to do evil, Chris! I'll do it all by my lonesome. *I'll* take these to MacPherson—it will be my own proper 'scoop.'" She sighed.

"Oh, Chris, if only there weren't any wolves, then we could all of us be sheep. I wonder, sometimes, that the good Lord didn't think of it, when he was making up His world."

XXXVII

COLLISION OF WILLS

RUGGLES had hardly gone when he appeared again in Gard's private office.

She did not look up from her work; but her brows wrinkled humorously.

"What, more scruples, Chris?"

"Yes, Gard, I forgot—there's Mrs. Corlis."

Gard frowned.

"What of her?" she asked sharply. "Where does she come in, I'd like to know?"

"Why, it affects her," he explained, a bit meekly. "He's her husband, you know."

"Well, she'll just have to stand the consequences of being his wife, then, I guess." Gard settled decisively into her chair.

"But, don't you see, Gard," Chris persisted, "not only is Mr. Corlis involved, but Senator Dawes is also. And I know her whole heart is set upon her father's reëlection."

"I can't help that," snapped Gard viciously. "It's not my fault that she's mixed up in a bad crowd." She bent resolutely to her desk. A moment later she consented to explain: "Mrs. Corlis will have to stand it, that's all—as I've had to stand things, or any other poor person."

"But," excepted Ruggles, after a pause, "you don't see what I mean."

Gard swung in her chair and confronted him. "What exactly, Chris, do you mean?"

"Well, you see," he began, fumbling his hat, "she is my friend, she has been kind to me—her father helped me once when I was a young fellow—and I don't like to sit by and see them injured."

"'Tis hard on them," jeered Gard, lines of scorn around her mouth. "Of course, it don't count that she happens to be the rich and fashionable Mrs. Corlis—that isn't what excites your solicitude for her extremely delicate sensibilities at all, oh no!"

Chris catechised his motives rigorously.

"I don't know," he confessed; "I hope not, and I don't believe it does. Probably you'll be surprised, when I say I think it is nearer compassion than anything else in me. Somehow, I hate to have her hurt, and this will hurt her terribly. She is unhappy, Gard; I suspect she's been unhappy most of her life, and I'm sorry for her."

"Mrs. Corlis! You pity her?" echoed Gard, incredulously. The notion seemed incomprehensible.

"Yes, I do." He bore her inquisition steadfastly. "I never pitied any one more."

She flushed fiercely.

"Why don't you pity me, if you've got any pitying to do?"

"Oh, Gard, I'd kneel to you," he said, reverently, impelled by almost a sense of guilt to make her what poor amends he could.

She quivered as if the words had been a slap across the cheek.

"If I'd whine, I suppose you'd pity me too," she cried in a hot shame. Then as if in a wish to prevent his answer and to suppress what she herself had said, she resumed in haste, "All the same, I can't understand why you should waste silly sentiment on her. She's had everything to repletion ever since she could breathe. I'm sure I wouldn't set out deliberately for the purpose of stepping on her aristocratic toes, but I'm free to say that if incidentally they happen to get bruised, it may do her good. Even Mrs. Corlis may find out there are some things she can't have."

Ruggles felt the force of what she said; but, as so often, what he considered a plain duty gripped him.

"But, Gard," he urged.

"But what?" she demanded. "What did you come back here to tell me? There's something more—out with it!"

"I believe I ought—I ought to let her know," said Chris, with difficulty. "She's my friend and I promised to help her in any little thing I could

this campaign. So I am convinced I ought to tell her beforehand what you mean to do—if you still mean to."

Gard fell back hopelessly into her chair, her thin nostrils dilating.

"But where, Chris, if you have any, does your obligation to me come in, if you please?"

The moralist did not flinch.

"You are bent on what I cannot approve of, Gard."

She flushed again hotly and struck her fist on the desk by her side.

"Let me tell you one thing, for good, right now. You can't stop me, Chris; no power exists that can stop me. Just regard that as certain."

He made no immediate reply, but sat and thought.

Gard watched the changes of his face.

"Oh," she cried, "let's quit quarreling. What's a mere trifle, like a great difference of opinion, between friends anyhow?" she laughed.

Ruggles rose to go.

"I'm glad you see it that way," he said, rather dolefully.

"You don't imagine there's any other way I could see it, do you?" she rejoined heartily. "Go and tell your Mrs. Corlis, if you're going to. It can't do any harm, it won't alter facts, and she'll

learn about it just a day sooner than the public, that's all."

Nevertheless, her cheerfulness subsided the moment he was gone. She sighed.

"This separates us more than ever," she reflected. "I knew it ahead; I was sure when I first laid eyes on that swell. Her influence with him, though she doesn't mean it, is sure death to mine."

The following morning Gard stood in the outer office, delivering instructions to one of her clerks. It was about eleven o'clock. The door opened to admit a woman whose mere aspect sufficed to fix the whole working force in a stare.

The lady was plainly dressed, yet her appearance on that business scene seemed as instantly incongruous as the sudden advent had been of an old-time French *marquise*. Every one knew who she was, or, if they did not know, felt it. No one in Chicago had that air, save one woman, Mrs. W. H. D. Corlis.

The visitor advanced to Gard.

"You are Miss Brown?"

The simplicity of the recognition was complete.

"Please walk into my office, Mrs. Corlis; I'll follow."

Gard stopped to say one word more to the clerk.

She closed the door behind her with her back

and surreptitiously turned the key; she might have a scene on her hands, for all she knew.

Mrs. Corlis stood well in the middle of the room, and turned to front Gard as the door closed. For a moment she critically surveyed the clear and edged face of the tall young woman. She found that she could not smile easily under that regard, which seemed to ask, tacitly yet incisively, what her business might be.

"Thank you, I will not sit down," she began, with a shade of embarrassment—she had not been asked to sit down. "I have but a moment, and I fancy you must know for what I have come."

"I guess I can guess," said Gard, with the complete dryness only possible to the undiluted Yankee stock.

Mrs. Corlis shivered just perceptibly; she divined the futility of her errand then and there.

"Mr. Christopher Ruggles," she commenced anew, but found her auditor too contained to allow her to proceed.

"I understand, Mrs. Corlis," Gard volunteered. "Now, what of it?"

The demand was implacable, but too natural to impart offense.

Experienced Mrs. Corlis was taken aback.

"I—I wished to beg of you, Miss Brown, not to do it," she murmured, a shade confused.

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you," replied Gard,

in the most business-like of tones, "but you are just a little too late. *The Pundit* has had the news since late yesterday afternoon, and *The Pundit* never disgorges."

"Then you cannot recall it—not at my urgent request?" gasped the visitor, astonished, but not yet quite realizing the invalidity of her prerogative in the present premises.

"But why should I—excuse me, Mrs. Corlis?"

The gray eyes looked a cool surprise.

"Indeed, I do not know why you should," the older woman involuntarily admitted. "Unless"—she endeavored rather unsuccessfully to assume a persuasive smile—"unless you should consent to do me, personally, a favor I shall never forget. You are not, of course, you cannot be unaware of what damage, what irretrievable damage, the publication will cause us."

"That is just the reason why I gave the thing away," the inexplicable young woman announced succinctly.

"But what, pray, can you have against me?" exclaimed Mrs. Corlis in her amazement. "Your object is not to ruin us, is it?"

Gard answered with an ironical, and to her visitor an enigmatical smile.

"Suppose me animated by an abstract love of justice. How about it then?"

Mrs. Corlis was perplexed, but she recovered.

"Absurd!" she commented mildly; then smiled her skepticism. "We women never are, Miss Brown."

"Yet maybe I have a sense of duty toward the people of the state," Gard countered.

"You have not, Miss Brown—at least, not in this case." The dark eyes held an amused challenge.

Gard in a moment fiercely answered it.

"No, I have not; you are right, Mrs. Corlis."

Some fine speculation in the visitor's scrutiny resulted from this declaration. She became conciliatory.

"It is not I whom you are hostile to. What is it then? Perhaps I have been your friend more than you quite understand. I've praised you, I've forwarded your interests, I'm sure."

"Who asked your help, I'd like to know?" Gard blazed in a royal, white fury, divining in what quarter aid had been lent. "Who wanted good words from you?"

"I'm sorry; I did not mean to presume," Mrs. Corlis returned, the sincere heart of her sympathizing despite the insult of the outburst. "You see, I could not help admiring you, and, I don't know why, but I have been sorry for you besides."

Gard raged like a Saint Michael militant, her wrath a glory.

"See here, Mrs. Corlis, since you want to know, I'll tell you why I sent it—the thing—to *The Pundit*—why I have killed your husband's political future with a blow. *I hate him!*"

"Hate him? You?"

"I!"

The masks which every face accumulates, burned suddenly transparent in this intensity, and dark eyes and gray eyes probed deeply into the knowledges that each confessed. For a furious second no reticence existed between those two souls, the defiant one scorning to withhold what the foreboding other had divined.

Mrs. Corlis stepped back, half lifting an arm. Her lips parted, her face grew strained.

"Oh," she moaned, and shut the horror from her sight. "I am a little dizzy, I think," she said. "Let me sit down."

Gard set the chair and Mrs. Corlis sank upon it. She looked crushed, but she did not give way. She asked faintly for a glass of water.

Gard brought it and, while Mrs. Corlis drank, assured herself there was to be no scene. The assurance allowed her to relent.

Relent? In truth, her compassion overflowed. As she looked down on the broken woman and witnessed her fortitude, Gard understood why Chris had pitied her; she forgot that Mrs. Corlis

was a " swell," and saw only the wasted face, the strengthless figure, the poor, quivering hands.

" You must have hated me from the first," said Mrs. Corlis with a half smile, when presently she relifted her eyes. " Funny; I thought it some absurd jealousy on poor, dear Chris' account."

" Never mind that," bade Gard. " I was mean to try to hurt you—I didn't know I could be so mean."

Mrs. Corlis saw the gulp in Gard's throat and the relaxing of the face.

" Ah, if you can be hard on others, you can be harder on yourself. Why should I blame you? You very strong people suffer so terribly; so perhaps it's right I should—a little—in my turn."

" That's what I used to wish," said Gard, " but I don't now."

" I do not blame you; it was natural." Mrs. Corlis reached shyly to touch Gard's hand. " You will let me call you Gard? " she asked.

" I will," said Gard vehemently.

" It is the right name for you," mused Mrs. Corlis; " it expresses you."

" But what makes you so sweet to me? " Gard suddenly demanded, " when I have been so bitter? "

Her unspoken question was: How can you bring yourself to tolerate me, when you have learned what shame I have been through?

Mrs. Corlis looked comprehension.

"Ah, why should I not be kind?" she asked. "What else is left for me to be?"

An ineffable compunction made beautiful the face she had upturned to Gard.

Next moment she was gathering her skirts with an elaborate hand, preparing to rise.

"I must hasten; I've a number of things to do," she mentioned inconsequentially.

As she gained her feet by aid of Gard's arm, she was again altogether the great lady. She moved to the door, which she tried and then unlocked. Before opening it she half turned.

"Good-by, Gard," she said quite softly, a look more of admiration than anything else in her dark eyes. "Good-by," she repeated. "You've stood the test, Gard—while I"—her voice broke a trifle, "I've not only been deceived; I've failed. And there's no time left me to repair what I would like."

Gard sprang forward with impulsive sympathy, but Mrs. Corlis had closed the door.

XXXVIII

MACPHERSON

"I LIKE this, McBride," said Mr. Corlis half amused, half displeased. "Here is a letter from MacPherson of *The Pundit*. Wants to see me, and will I call at his office this afternoon, at the latest. These editors dispose of us as if we were puppets to be moved at their pleasure; the world performs, in their opinion, in order to supply them 'copy.' Why shouldn't he come after me, is what I want to know? Am I at his beck and call?"

"Humph, if I was you, I'd drop 'round," the Boss advised. "You can just as well; it won't be much trouble. Them editors ain't to be monkeyed with durin' campaigns."

Mr. Corlis showed some irritation.

"This business of being a candidate, McBride, resolves itself into becoming every one's servant."

"Well, what d'ye want?" muttered the Boss. "Thinkin' you're goin' to have the governorship served up to you on a silver platter, was you? You'd better make it your bizness, I'm tellin' you, to see MacPherson and be mighty smooth to him."

The candidate hardly relished McBride's tone, which, if new, was becoming frequent. He compressed his lips, however, and made no reply.

The Boss gave more advice.

"Mac must be up to something; he wouldn't have sent for you, if he wasn't. Don't judge him by his looks, Corlis, if he does look like a singed cat. He looks easy, Mac does; but of the whole force of them pen-drivin' fellers, he is the feller most onto his job."

Mr. Corlis mounted the two flights of narrow wooden stairs that afforded ingress to the cramped editorial rooms in the dumpy, red-brick, old building, whence issued the Chicago *Pundit,* daily, to be read by thousands upon thousands throughout all the Central West.

Having thus gained the third and topmost story, the candidate discovered through a wide-open door, two bare rooms, carpetless, and possessed generally of the aspect of an attic. Hard-seated wooden chairs in the first room indicated its use as a waiting room. Beyond, in the farther room, the doorway appeared blocked by a flat, scarred, unvarnished desk or table, whose top was heaped with newspapers. Closer inspection had revealed the floor of the room also littered and strewn with newspapers, whose big, black titles spelt the names of great cities, little cities, villages,

and counties in all quarters of the United States, seemingly.

Behind the table, facing the door, without so much, apparently, as the buffer of an office-boy between him and the public, was perched upon a high stool the controlling spirit of the institution —a little, weazened, shrunken, bald old man, who clutched a newspaper in his small, claw-like hand. The shriveled face, in which the small veins spread a faint violet network, reminded Corlis of a frozen apple on a leafless tree. Through spectacles that bestrode his nose just above its terminating bulge, the spinsterly old man followed down the printed columns, reading newspapers the livelong day. Reading newspapers was, indeed, his occupation; he read any newspaper, read them all—New York organs, Podunk weeklies, Kansas agricultural sheets—any constituted grist for grinding in his intellectual mill. He read haphazardly, as he picked them up, and his brain cast into order what his eyes took in without beginning and without end. At home, evenings, in his bachelor apartments, he corrected his vision by the perusal of the French classics, sipping many tumblers of hot whisky and water the while.

The representative of millions of money, who was Republican candidate for governor, stopped in the first room in the expectation that the editor

would take notice of him. But the editor remained oblivious.

"Is the old cock deaf?" thought Mr. Corlis, and advanced noisily across the threshold of the *sanctum sanctorum* itself.

MacPherson wrinkled his eyes over the print, but did not stir, though the invader touched and jarred the table with his body.

Mr. Corlis felt his gorge rising; one of his power was accustomed to obeisances, and irritably noticed their absence.

"Ahem," he cleared his throat. "I am Mr. Corlis."

He expected at least to see the editor give a start. But the editor did not so much as lift his eyes; he smiled serenely at the newspaper pages, saying abstractedly,

"Ah, sit down, sit down. Find yourself a seat —don't mind the papers; sit on 'em."

"I'll stand," said Mr. Corlis haughtily.

The editorial eyelids lifted instantly, and the little diamond-pointed eyes caused Mr. Corlis to turn away his own cold orbs.

"Pray, Mr. Corlis," lisped the old man, significantly, "find a chair and draw close to me. I'm an aged gentleman with infirmities—a touch of the gout—and you'll agree with me, before I get through, that what you have to hear can be whispered none too privily."

Mr. Corlis acquiesced.

"A candidate is a public servant, Mr. MacPherson," he smiled.

"Also general target," the editor amended drily.

Mr. Corlis bowed condescendingly. He never felt at ease or was properly gracious unless his superiority was admitted. Its recognition he had been sparring for since his entrance upon MacPherson.

The editor spoke impersonally.

"In the course of a campaign, Mr. Corlis, I get hold of all sorts of charges against the candidates. Most of them go into the waste-basket; but here's one I wanted to have you say something about, either in the way of refutation or confutation or whatever you choose."

"This is not an interview, Mr. Editor, as I understand it?" inquired Mr. Corlis, with resentful caution.

"Certainly not; anything you may remark will not go beyond this room. Please to glance at these."

The editor handed his visitor some proofs, and while the latter read, he watched, as if he were more concerned to read what Mr. Corlis' face betrayed than to learn what Mr. Corlis' tongue would declare.

A spasm, just perceptible, flashed across the

features of the candidate before the countenance was twisted into an inscrutable mask. Pallor remained, however, and it spread. He returned the proofs with the cool impertinence,

"Pardon me, if this is not an interview, is it blackmail?"

"No check, however large, can square it, if that is what you mean, Mr. Corlis," replied MacPherson, quietly.

"How did you get it?" demanded the candidate.

"It appears in to-morrow morning's *Pundit,*" the editor announced.

"Then why did you put me to the trouble of calling here?" The visitor looked truculent.

"Curiosity, only vulgar curiosity, Mr. Corlis, I assure you," the old man sighed. "How a man of your superiority would take it, that's what I wanted to see."

Mr. Corlis set his square jaw; he governed himself, or was it the practical exigency which governed him? There was a definite point to be secured.

"Mr. MacPherson, is there no possible way I can keep that out of *The Pundit?*"

"None that I am aware of, sir."

"What if I show you it is untrue—wide of the mark?"

"I've seen your handwriting, sir, and I have other proofs."

"The publication will damage my candidacy."

"That it will, sir."

"You seem to have me palpably on the hip, Mr. Editor."

The admission from so powerful a man might flatter a salaried editor.

"I have, Mr. Corlis."

The editor was cool, perhaps contemptuous.

"Permit me a question, Mr. MacPherson. Have you any personal animus against me?"

"Personalities do not affect *The Pundit,* sir. That constitutes one reason why we are a power. *The Pundit* publishes the truth without fear or favor—all the truth it can lay hands on, that it can find, beg, steal or borrow. We do not lie, either by omission or commission; it's the only virtue upon which we pride ourselves."

Mr. Corlis showed impatience under this elucidation; abstract principles always bored him.

"Then there is no hope of our coming to terms?" he concluded.

"None, sir. Nothing short of fire and flood can keep the story out of to-morrow's edition."

Mr. Corlis looked the editor in the eye. No flash illumined his own pale eyes nor was his voice raised by half a tone; but the great veins in the

full neck swelled, and a brutal strength coarsened the handsome face.

"You infernal old gutter-wallower! You damned scandal-monger!"

MacPherson chuckled; dared chuckle in the teeth of the magnificence of that wrath.

"The truth is not over-savory, I admit," he squeaked, and rubbed his little hands, "and it does soil one, some, to drag respectable corruption into the light of day." He smiled his glee. "I guess that'll hold you for a moment, won't it, Mr. Corlis?"

The candidate was livid; but still he kept his eye steady and his voice low.

"No decent man would speak to you on the street, if he weren't afraid of your rotten yellow sheet."

"Just so," smiled the editor, with the primness of a New England old maid. "Just so, so save your breath. I'm not respectable, never was, never will be, wouldn't if I could. If there's one thing I despise, next to a fool, it's respectability."

"Publish and be damned," growled Corlis. "I'll see that the banks put the screws on you. People all know what *The Pundit* is—they never believe what it says; it's a libelous, blackmailing institution."

MacPherson had risen on the rounds of his

stool; his rage was grotesque. He shook his tiny fist in his visitor's face and shrilled,

"Damn you, you lie, sir, you lie! Call me anything you please—I'm an old duck, I'm used to it. Say *The Pundit's* sensational, that it's stupid; but, sir, I'll let you know, sir, and know it almighty well, *The Pundit* never lies. You lie, when you say so, sir; you lie in your throat!" He glared at Corlis before he let himself down upon his seat again.

Then he continued, still wrathfully, but with the satisfaction one derives from a favorite theme,

"*The Pundit* is no better than the world it mirrors; we do not tolerate any idealizing around here, sir. But, by God, we are the one thing in this selfish, rotten, robberous, cheating, lustful, honor-prostituting, devilishly human city, that doesn't lie. Mebbe society can't be saved—I don't care much if it isn't. It ain't worth it. But if truth's salvation, you can buy salvation in *The Pundit* every morning for a cent and on a Sunday for a nickel."

Under the infliction of this lecture Mr. Corlis had had time to calculate. So truth was the old man's foible—no harm to try to humor it.

But MacPherson rounded on him instantaneously.

"You flatter me, Mr. Corlis? You say you are proud to meet an honest man? By God,

you're more offensive than before. No one but a fool ever met an honest man—I'm not honest; I've got my price; I'd sell my soul to get truth for *The Pundit.* What, you think you can smear me over with your flattery?" The diamond-pointed eyes glittered like a snake's. "In other words, you insult my intelligence—that's too much, sir. Wheedle me? Damn you, sir, get out of my office!"

XXXIX

EXPOSURE

MR. CORLIS emerged from *The Pundit* stairway upon the street. He was unruffled; he possessed, naturally, the self-control of the gambler and was wont to play the chances on human nature and on the turns of passion as he did on the futures of stocks. Usually, however, his fortune in life had provided him with "tips." His inner equanimity, therefore, under the present unexpected reverse, hardly matched his outwardly collected mein.

He got into a cab, directing it to McMahon's saloon only three blocks away in Clark street. When the cab stopped, he handed the "cabby" a dollar and darted into the saloon.

He nodded good-naturedly to the men behind the bar, powers in politics each one. The Cerberus on guard in the rear, hearing his approach, looked up haughtily from the paper he was reading, but when he saw the candidate he slid off his chair in a wink and touched his round, bald pate. "Your honor!" he gasped. "Recognized your honor by the pictures of your honor."

"Is McBride inside?" asked the incisive Corlis. "Who's with him?"

" Nobody, your honor. Walk right in; no need to announce the whole thing—that is, your honor."

Cerberus looked to see if his humor was shared. It was not.

" Mighty stuck on himself," mused Cerberus, as the candidate disappeared.

McBride started up when he saw who it was—for his girth the Boss was nimble.

" What's doin', Corlis? " he asked keenly. " By God, you look it."

" Should think I should, McBride. Is the door shut? "

Then Corlis broke out into a rage, whose manner was characteristic enough. The display was terrific, but no heat accompanied the passion.

McBride endured the exhibition phlegmatically.

" Quit it, Corlis," he said presently. " To let loose ain't to play the game. You've got to take your medicine in politics as well as the other feller."

" But this lets the bottom out," declared Corlis, grinding his strong teeth.

" Sure," assented the Boss. " Did you think I didn't see it? "

McBride had the more impervious hide, tanned by long exposure before it had ever been laved in cologne.

" But it don't make no difference, Corlis; you've got to play the hand out. When you held fours,

you played 'em strong—that's easy. Now you've got only ace high, it'll take nerve to play 'em the same way."

"I'm not weakening," growled the candidate. "Let me swear. But this fixes us, doesn't it?"

"Naw," disagreed the Boss, "not till election's come and gone. I never give up till after I'm licked."

"That's pure Irish braggadocio, McBride."

"When you've finished a campaign or two, Corlis, I'm tellin' you, you'll learn never to lay down till the last day, and never to feel sure, neither."

"But what are we to do after *The Pundit* gets through with us?"

"Do? Lie! It's up to us, ain't it, to lie—to lie for all that's in us. A lie does most as well as the truth, anyway; that's my experience. It'll be a stand-off between *The Pundit* and us fellers, and you can find plenty yaps enough to take stock in any old thing, if you'll only say it loud. The Senator's word will help some, too, I guess."

"You don't suppose," surmised Corlis presently, "that MacPherson would have the impudence to publish what I said to him? He might have had a stenographer hidden somewhere."

"Did he say anything?" asked McBride.

"He said I wasn't being interviewed. He might have said it to throw me off my guard."

"You're safe," decided the Boss. "Mac's Scotch and a damn Protestant. But how did the old man get on to us—you say he had all the Consolidated plans and figgers?"

"I did my best to convince him he had been imposed upon, but it wouldn't work," explained Corlis in disgust.

"Hell!" ejaculated the Boss.

"Of course," remarked Corlis, almost casually, but as if he were afforded some consolation, "we know there was only one leak possible, McBride. MacPherson must have been supplied from 'The Obelisk.'"

"What makes you think so?" snapped McBride, swinging on his heels, in order to watch every muscle in his colleague's face.

"There can be no other possible source for the information." Corlis smiled a bit sarcastically. "McBride, you've been a fool to trust too much to that young woman of yours."

"I don't think so," maintained the Boss, obstinately. Although their interests were mutual, their mutual irritation grew.

"You're blind, then," rejoined Corlis. "It could have come from nowhere but out of that office. I have it, it was that reporter—what's his name?—Ruggles—he's her friend; he lies around up there often. She will put it on him anyhow, see if she doesn't."

McBride intentionally curtailed the discussion.

"Humph! No use nosin' in the air, Corlis—the trouble's done, that's what we've got to reckon with and not who done the trouble. Keep yourself cool, while I fox 'round a day or so; then we'll fix up a contradiction. Time enough."

As Corlis went out, the Boss took up the telephone.

"Hello, that you, Gard? You know me, I guess?"

"Yes."

"*The Pundit* to-morrow. Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Something personal you done it for?"

"Yes."

"Thought so. Well, you ain't goin' to talk no more, are you?"

"No. Nobody will learn how *The Pundit* got on."

"All right, Gard. You've kicked a hole big as the La Salle street tunnel through our job. Let up now and take a rest; you've done it—you ought to be satisfied. And, Gard, come out home and see Gretchen to-night—I want to talk to you."

"I'll be there."

Gard dropped the telephone in her own office.

"That was McBride," she said to Ruggles; "he knows it."

"How does he take it?" asked the reporter.

" Oh, easy; same as I do. What's the use? "

Five minutes later the office-boy announced Mr. Corlis.

" Let him come right in," bade Gard.

He was already coming in, and as he entered, Gard wheeled her revolving chair and looked up with a brave smile. Ruggles took up his hat.

With Mr. Corlis came a chill. His concentrated rage magnified his handsomeness. His cold eyes swept over Gard, then noticed Ruggles for a moment; the reporter felt their contempt even to his bones.

Mr. Corlis went directly to the issue.

" You do not need to be accused, Miss Brown; you acknowledge it. No doubt you are proud of selling information to *The Pundit*—of having it to sell."

Gard was on her feet, confronting him with a face turned white, but resolute as rock; she had divined his purpose.

" Yes, I did it; I gave it to *The Pundit,* if that's what you mean," she said.

" From what motive did you do it, if not for money? " he challenged, with a sneer. " No one who knows your high character would attribute a mercenary motive to you."

He paused, and held her in a torture of suspense.

" Perhaps, out of my knowledge, I may be able

to suggest a motive—do you not think so?" He gloated. "Pray do not go, Mr. Ruggles"—he bowed disdainfully—"this may concern you much more than you imagine."

Gard had grown suddenly majestic, both with the pallor and the dignity of marble.

"You are quite right, Mr. Corlis," she said, simply, "my motive was revenge, at least as much of it as you are capable of understanding. And, let me add, the revenge is not inadequate."

That high demeanor, that acceptance of what he had designed to force shamefully upon her, stirred the ruffian in the gentleman. His was a cool and quiet savagery.

"Indeed, Miss Brown? In other words, in order that your young friend here may fully comprehend, you have violated your commercial honor in order to avenge your personal honor."

Involuntarily she sent an agonizing glance towards Ruggles, to withdraw it instantly as if sight of his presence seared her eyes. She rocked as she stood and her lids closed, but she was too proud to shrink; she held her head high up and took the blow.

"You felt you had evened your accounts with me," Mr. Corlis sneered. "But you overlooked the possibility of retaliation; you should not have made it so apparent that you were growing senti-

mental. But Mr. Ruggles will hardly find you all he dreamed since now he knows."

She shuddered painfully, but cried out,

"I knew you for a bad man, Mr. Corlis; but I didn't know you were a mean one, too."

The curious, involuntary contempt in the rejoinder perhaps stung him.

"No more than your friend here that you were a ruined woman," he hissed out.

A crash. Corlis turned. Ruggles was leaping for his throat. He had time to step back a foot or two; but Ruggles had grasped the collar of his coat.

"You infernal blackguard!" the reporter roared.

"Chris, let him go! I tell you, let him go!" commanded Gard. "It's my own sin has found me out."

"Get out of here," cried Ruggles, hoarsely, his great shoulders heaving with the mighty wrath of the slow man.

Mr. Corlis retired with dignity.

"My business is finished, I fancy."

At the door he half turned:

"You are young, Mr. Ruggles, but you may thank me for this, some day."

XL

THE CHARITY THAT COVERS SINS

LITTLE Mrs. McBride met Gard in the dim hall, where the smell of the dinner lingered.

Gretchen put up her lips to be kissed and her round arms to encircle the neck of her tall friend.

"I told Mike, Gard," purred Gretchen, soothingly, "I told him why you did it, and I guess he guessed beforehand, because he wasn't much surprised. And you needn't be afraid, dear Gard; you know our Mike's a good friend to women. And besides, I shouldn't wonder if he ain't really stuck on you, because you had your nerve with you—Mike always said you had more nerve than any man he'd ever seen. And he likes a friend of his to be a good hater—he's such a good one himself."

Gard let herself go; she, who like a strong man, never wept, she put down her lofty head on Gretchen's soft shoulder and sobbed in deep, dry sobs.

She had hardly flinched; she had faced shame itself, if not victoriously, nobly at least. And she had come to the McBrides' to bear it out, to ac-

cept, if not open reproaches, then understood condemnation for her betrayal of the confidence of her patron. Besides, now that the act was accomplished, *The Pundit* told, sharp questionings were devised by her uneasiness, and, despite her reasoning, the grief she had brought on Mrs. Corlis troubled her conscience.

But in the place of upbraidings she was met with vindication; in the house of the publican and his wife, a former sinner, she was welcomed with love. They understood her passions, they could feel sympathy for her. It was too much. Gard sank upon her knees, her arms clinging around Gretchen's waist, as, in the homely print, the woman cast up by the waves clings to the cross.

In the basement, downstairs, the Black Boss sat in his shirt sleeves next the dining-room table, drinking beer, his Celtic susceptibilities deadened by the cotton-wool envelope of Teutonic comfort. He looked at the two women when they entered, with the daze of his ruminations in his expression; but when it reached his intelligence who it was, he got cumbersomely to his feet.

Sobriety of sorrow had replaced the splendor of defiance in Gard's bearing; she looked more womanly than was usual with her. Yet it was hardly the repentant Magdalen. Even in her tragedy Gard was far from orthodox; it was the grateful human creature.

McBride not only got upon his feet, he crossed the room to greet and welcome her. He bowed to her as if she had been Mrs. Corlis or a queen; the manipulation of his bulk might have been somewhat ponderous, but the intention of his heart was knightly.

"Mighty glad to see you now, Gard," he said, his blue eyes beaming. "You're the closest friend this family's got—ain't she, Gretchen? I want you to come over here and sit down and have a beer with me."

Gard seated herself in a chair alongside the big chair of the Boss. The flaxen *hausfrau* fetched the mugs of beer and then perched her round self on an arm of Gard's seat, her two long braids hanging one across each shoulder and down her breast. The Boss, black and burly, blinked benevolently, thought of his own loss furthest from his consciousness, while the maternal solicitude of his soft Gretchen for her independent friend brought a tear to his heart and a smile to his eye.

"We remember, we do, don't we, Gretchen?" said the Boss. "Where'd this family be, if it hadn't been for Gard, I want to know."

Gretchen kissed Gard's neck.

"You was my friend before Mike was—when people looked sidewise at me out of their eye."

"And we don't forget it, we don't, Gard."

The Boss slapped his knee.

After a while Gard resumed something of her usual flashing manner; it was her habit to speak out.

"You don't seem very mad about it, after all," she said, rallying McBride.

"Whist! it's my uncommon good-nature," winked the Boss in reply. Then he wagged his big head dolorously.

"But you kilt my chance of becomin' too rich to breathe."

"Pshaw, you'd rather be honest than rich, McBride," she retorted. "All men would."

"Give me the chance to choose between," he chuckled; "my virtue needs tremendous to be tried."

"Oh, no, it's above suspicion," clamored Gard.

"How it just does take you, Gard dear, to wake Mike up," commented Gretchen with approval.

"All the same you oughtn't to 'a done it, though I don't blame you none," the Boss concluded. "But I guess you near squared accounts, Gard, if anybody's askin'."

Again the Boss could not repress a twinkle.

"Not if the Republicans are still going to win," excepted Gard. The Boss's equanimity had suddenly alarmed her fears.

He grinned.

"Good! You don't let go, do you, Gard? What a first-class fightin' man you'd have made."

"You think you will still win?" pressed Gard. "You'd be sorry if you didn't?"

"I don't know," answered the Boss frankly. "He's stuck on his destiny, he is. I can see that to be governor of Illinois ain't goin' to content him none; he's figgerin' away ahead. But what I'm figgerin' is, that when he gets to be governor once, he'll take it into his head to do the reformin' act; it'd be a grand-stand play that'd make him solid with the Puritans, for him to turn his back on me and the organization that boosted him. He's just the feller to play that trick, I've made up my mind. We two are thick as mud now; but after January first next he might claim my breath inside the State House down at Springfield 'd tarnish the pure atmosphere. He might, there's no tellin'."

"I see," said Gard, in her old manner; "you're a stickler still for that one principle of yours, honor among thieves."

"That explains why I ain't as mad as I might be at what you've gone and done," resumed the Boss. "If Corlis is the kind of cuss to kick away the ladder he climbed up by, what use is he goin' to be to me in my business?"

Gard stayed that night at the McBrides', and Gretchen slept with her. Such close communion it

was which drew from Gard the story of how Mr. Corlis had denounced her in the office before Christopher Ruggles.

"He is so hard, so hard," she moaned. "I read it all in his face, Gretchen. His sense of purity was shocked. He demands purity in us women, purity first of all, and, not having that, we can have everything else fine in vain."

Gretchen wisely urged that Gard must give him time.

"He will come back, Gard, never fear."

"What does he know of human nature, how it is a blend in us all?" demanded Gard in sudden protest. "All he thinks of is what doesn't exist, abstractions, tricks of words that he exalts and would like to die for—Justice, Truth, Progress, Purity—and such vast mouthfuls. Oh, sometimes I hate him for it, he is so blind! Warm human love, human pity, human forgiveness, human comradeship, the toleration that makes allowances and the faith that's loyal—oh, he is poised and studious; he never once suspects that such commonplaces are all that are alive, that his bleak ideals are just inside his head."

Gretchen raised herself upon an elbow to lean and kiss Gard's mouth.

"He'll learn, he'll learn, he'll suffer so, he'll learn. It is the only way for him, Gard dear, and I'll bet he's suffering a heap right now."

Gard had to laugh.

"You're such a perfect squirrel, Gretchen."

Gretchen snuggled.

"Mike says I'm a little fool. It's so, too. But little fools know more about some few things than smart folks do."

XLI

TWO SCENES FROM THE LIVES OF WOMEN

GRETCHEN slept and, after a while, Gard slept fitfully also. But she lay long awake, and, as she lay, she thought of all that had happened and how the worth of a test is that it reveals the stuff in people. But what Chris had said to her and she to Chris in the office after Mr. Corlis had gone away formed the persistent burden of her mind.

This was the scene:

Ruggles had stood, breathing deeply; he did not look at Gard. She had gone limp; her limbs loosened, her face wan, her eyes like those of a beaten dog, involuntarily supplicatory.

"Chris," she whispered painfully. "Chris," she repeated.

He gave no least sign of hearing, not so much as by the twitching of a muscle; he was staring horribly before him. She would have touched him in appeal, but did not dare drag herself nearer him.

"Chris," she agonized, "only speak to me."

He would not look—he was not conscious of his cruelty. A spasm suddenly convulsed his face.

"Tell me," he gasped, "tell me that blackguard lied!"

She threw back her head with unconscious, queenly motion, to look at him, to study him, while he hung in suspense. The truth was evident; she scorned it, even while it tortured her; jealousy as a man was what he suffered.

"I suppose you'll despise me when I answer that he didn't lie," she said, contemptuously. "So like a man." A brave smile circled her quivering mouth.

"And if he did not, if he spoke the truth, does it make me different? I am the same I was—before, before you knew."

She could not, for her life, restrain the sob that choked her voice.

He turned to her, but he did not lift his eyes.

"When a man loves a woman—" he began tensely.

"Oh, so you found it out," she jeered, in reaction from excess of pain. "It took a wretched physical jealousy to enlighten you, did it?" In a deep tone, "I could have told you a year ago, dear Chris."

He buried his face in his hands to avoid the imperious yearning of her eyes. His shoulders sank miserably.

The lines of Gard's chin came out distinct and clear; her head poised itself a bit defiantly. She put her hands behind her back as was her wont

when she could not keep them still. She began with the simplicity of a child,

"Oh, Chris, what of it all? What if years ago that man did make me love him, till I found him out? It was so hard and I had so to struggle! I had to fight despair and my self-contempt and a bitter world outside. And all the time, too, I had to work my fingers to the bone to keep myself. Can you not pity, some, the girl I was, and make allowance, Chris, for her ignorance, her countryness and what she didn't know? Surely you can pity her, at least—perhaps forgive her even—as I do. And it took me many a year to do that, Chris."

She waited. He had half turned his back.

She stepped nearer to him, close, and when she spoke, a new tone colored her speech, a tone of suppressed demand.

"Have you, then, no sins in your own lost youth, that you must be so hard? Yet it is dead, and it would anger you to be tasked now for what you were when your youth was alive. I—I am not that girl! I am a woman, and the more a woman, abler to think and live and love, because I've suffered and struggled and succeeded, even as you have, Christopher Ruggles. What did you want of me, what would you have? Just an immaculate mistress, a prattling child?"

"Every man," he blundered out, "keeps an ideal. It hurts to have it violated."

"No doubt," she assented drily. Then in a quick burst came the storm. Her bosom heaved, the gray eyes flamed, and she was clothed with majesty.

"Ideal!" she cried. "Yes, the ideal his own sultanic vanity conceived for him. He insists a woman must keep pure for him, for the future and for him! But I tell you now, Chris Ruggles, I value myself higher, yes and better respect myself as I am this day, than if I were, to the last pretty ribbon, what your man's ideal would have me be. I know my own strength, I've tested my courage, I've beaten the world out, and I have not been downed. There is no speculative quality about me. I can look you squarely in the eyes, I can say honestly I am the better woman for what I have passed through, and you have no real right to spurn me."

It cost Gard infinitely to say these things, to stand out and fiercely vindicate herself. But at the crisis a sort of noble rage seized her that burned up any feeble sense of shame. For it enraged her to feel that the highest in her was arraigned, where the neutral virtues might have strutted in complacency.

Chris looked up, to receive the effect in full of her surprising splendor, the sudden sublimation

into grandeur of a white and golden woman. He could not bear the glory, so looked down. But he struck at it slanderously with the words,

"If you had it all to live again, would you, in order to become what you are now—would you do again as you have done?"

It turned her to a wounded, gasping, quivering thing—it cut the pedestal from under her.

Maybe he did not perceive what was his cruelty; his lids were very heavy with his own woe.

"Let me go," he entreated, self-engrossed. "I must get away—be by myself."

He started to move as if dazed.

"Yes, Chris," she agreed brokenly. "But, oh Chris, come back sometime. We were friends before—before—such friends! And we will be friends again—say so—friends still—after—" She bent to the wall.

He groped his way, blindly, to the door. He could not look at her. He stammered,

"Sometime, Gard, yes, sometime—perhaps it won't be long. For, anyhow, we, Gard, we stick together—we're friends for good."

The very day the exposure of the Electrical Consolidated appeared in *The Pundit,* Mrs. Corlis took occasion to announce her departure for Newport. She would leave the next day save one.

"I find I must enjoy the pleasure of the season

at Newport after all," she said. "It is the inevitable frivolity of my sex, Walter dear."

She had just returned from her afternoon drive, and Mr. Corlis, who had come home from downtown early, had met her as she stepped out of the carriage and entered the house with her. Now she stood with one foot upon the first step of the stair, reluctant to pause, indeed, yet held by his obvious desire.

"I wish you would be good enough to reconsider, Victoria," a novel dependence in his manner. "How is it possible for me to get along without you? Your advice, to say nothing of your encouragement, is simply indispensable, as you must yourself be aware. You have done everything, you've been the real manager; you it was who mollified McBride, you influenced the Governor—"

The mention of her services perceptibly pained her.

"I don't wish to hear of that, Walter," she bade. Then she yawned.

"The truth is I have lost my interest; politics I find a fearful bore, and I'm quite tired out. So," sweetly, "let me go upstairs and dress; I haven't any too much time."

He insisted.

"I fear you are influenced by this morning's *Pundit;* you are experiencing a fit of disgust. But

such attacks, believe me, Victoria, are inseparable from the management of great affairs. They are the malady that attends success."

She smiled with disillusion at his words—nay, with just a suspicion of mockery in her eyes.

"Don't revive that old vanity in me, Walter; it is dead. Besides, I assure you, I don't care; I am indifferent to great affairs, sick of senators and governors and intrigues and lies. My taste is feminine. I long for amusement, and Newport alone can satisfy my soul."

He reddened a bit under this raillery.

"I suppose it is the charges of *The Pundit* that have produced this revolution in your mind," he said impatiently. "For my part, I fail to see why the publication should affect you in the least. From your point of view, Victoria, it is merely an accident. You knew of the project before; I laid it all before you and you were enthusiastic; you interested Mr. Jarrett in the scheme. What I don't understand is why you should regard the thing so differently, simply because it's been aired in a newspaper."

"True," she answered coldly. "But we women, Walter, are limited in understanding and seldom perceive the full consequences of anything until some one comes along to demonstrate the enormity in detail and set it forth in black and

white. Then it reaches our dullness and—it shocks our morality."

The significance of her look passed into a slow smile. She gathered her skirts and went up a step or two.

"A moment, please," he begged, nay, bade. He pressed close against the banisters.

"Is that all, Victoria, have you no more reasons?" His eyes, his whole face, were urgent, accusant. "Confess, this is your excuse—there is something you have learned. Do I not know what it is?"

He gazed up at her with that force of intimacy which in a second of time cannot be denied and which a second is sufficient to supply the answer for.

She hid nothing, did not attempt to, even. She eyed him with a little wonder at the shamelessness of his effrontery.

"I have; it is true," she said. Then she trembled.

He shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"But what of it, Victoria; you are a woman of the world. The offense is surely outlawed, it was so long ago, and, excuse me, you have condoned much more since. I am confident you are not going to be foolish at this eleventh hour."

He continued arguing to her as if to a court; he appealed to her judgment. Did he fancy she

could not suffer, that the politician had totally superseded the woman in her, that ambition was her exclusive passion, and heart by her discarded as a weakness? She realized at that moment, as never quite so explicitly before, the infinite unlikeness of her husband and herself. They shared in all things except in soul.

He urged the practical considerations for which in common they had waged the campaign—her father's reëlection, his own election, the aggrandizement of the family. But she shook her head.

He ventured to suggest his own ambition, to hint his Cæsarean nature, to avow the necessity of her coöperation in his schemes, as of her toleration of his passions. That contention he had found had never yet failed of effect upon her.

It failed now.

"No, no, Walter," she plead, almost mournfully, "do not try to influence me. I am through. You may be a great man; indeed, I believe you are. But I am not great, I am only a woman, and to me finally the claims of pity and of sorrow seem of more concern than those of intellect and pride."

She trailed above the banister as she went slowly up the stairs, her face contrite but resolute. She spoke down,

"Reproaches between us, Walter, are ridiculous. I admit I have no more reason to complain

because great men lack soul, than you have because women lack brain. It is the nature of both. Adieu."

XLII

THE ISSUE IS FORMED

IT WAS "hell to pay," as McBride had said it was bound to be. The publication, "the exposure," by *The Pundit,* drew an open letter from Governor Ransom within twenty-four hours. The Governor publicly repudiated the party and denounced the Chicago platform as a deception and the candidate as a fraud. Furthermore, he declared himself for the Democratic nominee, Gustave Schwab, and announced that he would himself take the stump in the latter's interest.

The letter contained terrible phrases, whose biting rancor only one politician in Illinois had the ability to invent. They were phrases that lent themselves to quotation, being detachable, that nailed the attention of the average voter, that indelibly printed themselves upon the popular consciousness.

The letter styled W. H. D. Corlis "an Eastern candidate," and called McBride "the Croker of the West." The "precious pair," the letter charged, were united in an attempt to corrupt Illinois by "New York methods" and to foist upon

the state a machine modeled upon those of Platt and Quay. Having already captured Chicago, the letter asserted, possessing a war chest supplied from the loot of a great city, the conquest of the state was next in order. To win Springfield, " to set a corporation instrument and personage in the gubernatorial chair," to elect a legislature which would prove as pliant as the Chicago Common Council itself, were necessary preliminaries to the general debauch of free grants of franchises and privileges to corporations that " the piratical Corlis-McBride gang " had planned. " McBride has Tammanyized Chicago—is Corlis to be allowed to Tammanyize the state? " was the letter's final challenge.

McBride must have had the faith derived from successful experiments, as to the efficacy of a good, stiff lie. Immediately he followed Governor Ransom's letter of repudiation and denunciation by an interview of general and explicit denial, which all the Chicago newspapers printed next morning. The Boss denied the story of *The Pundit;* he denied that any corporation such as the Electrical Consolidated had been proposed; he denied being privy to any scheme of spoliation as charged or to any other that could be imagined. He denied these things for himself, for Mr. Corlis, for the party; he characterized the purported exposure as an absurd campaign subterfuge and clumsy lie.

Finally, he wound up by calling his enemies "pharisees," "hypocrites," "black-legs," and "dudes."

The Boss had never been known "to talk" in the progress of a municipal campaign; he was too "foxy" to commit so primary a mistake. His friends wondered why he had "loosened up" now, and asked themselves if the "old man" had acquired the "big head" or lost his cunning. Indeed, McBride himself, when the interview stared at him in cold type, manifested nervousness. He worried in his own mind, although to followers he gruffly said, "Be on your way and mind your own bizness."

Mr. Corlis took him to task.

"You should have consulted me; you aren't above advice, McBride. Inside Cook County I never knew your judgment to be at fault, and no question but that you know it all. But the state is not your bailiwick; the state game is a different thing from the city game, and, when you talk for the state, you must catch the exact note or you produce discord."

The candidate was considerate and superior.

The Boss did not relish the lecture. He faced Corlis with red in his eyes.

"Damn it, what do you want? I ain't thinkin' none of makin' votes; I'm figgerin' to hold on to them we've got. Something had to be said,

so as to let our friends answer back, when Ransom gets goin' roarin' round with *Pundit* ammunition to fire off. It's up to us to put up a hell of a bluff and right now—what it is don't just so much matter, so it's loud. If we can sit solid for a month and stand the gaff, we've got a slim chance comin' to us. If we play the baby for half a minit, election day'll see our finish."

Corlis demurred; he not only took exception, but he urged his own plan. The truth was, the cool and practical Corlis took his own political career somewhat romantically; he had never heard that other great political leaders were puppets of an Irish boss, and he fancied that this was an opportune occasion to assert decisively his own primacy. McBride had made the mistake of trusting the Consolidated secret to a woman, and McBride was now aggravating the blunder by talking. Corlis put his foot down.

But McBride "got his back up." He confronted the candidate with a black scowl, what "polish" he had been able to assume through his recent brief association with gentlemen proving as transitory as "a shine" on a rainy day. The Boss stood brutal, swaggering; he resembled a bulldog with his teeth bared.

"Damn you, Corlis," he broke out at last, "you listen to me! I've got you where the hair's short and you might as well be good now as later,

for you've got to be good. I'm runnin' this here campaign; you're just as much a greenhorn in politics as any of them kid-gloved gentlemen of the Reform Committee. You're the candidate for certain reasons, you are; but you ain't the leader of the party in this state nor in no ward of the city nor county of the country, you ain't.—Now, there ain't no need for your gettin' huffy, it won't do you no good." And the Boss waved a fat hand.

Mr. Corlis, in the course of the argument, had turned a bit red, then very pale. Now he said calmly,

"There's some truth in what you say, McBride."

As a practical American it was his *metier* to get along with the Boss, although as a misplaced *grand seigneur* his impulse was to knock the vulgar pleb down. But Corlis always had himself well in hand: his impulses were luxuries; his interests, the bread of life.

"Now, I'm tellin' you," continued McBride, "if you don't want to be licked worse than any feller ever was in Illinois, you've got to come to time. I tell you straight, I don't trust you none. That's the truth, and to be flat, I want assurances."

"What more do you mean?" demanded the candidate in indignation, partly simulated, partly real. "Haven't I promised you, if elected, that

your organization will find itself recognized at Springfield as it never was? Isn't that satisfactory to you, McBride?"

"It was; it ain't no more. Your promise was clamped tight by the Electrical Consolidated scheme; you had to sleep in the same bed with me. Now that's kilt. If you once get to be governor, I've no ropes on you, as the franchise bizness won't work. So the way the thing's turned out, I don't see where I get off at," growled the Boss in conclusion.

"What do you want?" Corlis defined the condition bluntly.

A faint glow spread under the harsh visage of McBride. "Just a sop," he declared. "If you still want me and the organization to fight out this here campaign for you, you'll please just put down a notion of your grateful sentiments for our services on paper, and sign your name to it. I want it so the boys can know exactly what you'll do for us, when you fill the chair down at Springfield."

Corlis recoiled. He suggested,

"But suppose some time it should get out, in the future, you know; it would ruin my career. National politics are not state and city politics, McBride."

The Boss smiled a bit unctuously.

"I know," he nodded; "but you'll have the chance of earnin' back the paper by livin' up to

it's stipulations, Mr. Corlis. It's a trifle, just a little thing between friends; that's the way to look at it, sure, Mr. Corlis. And did you ever know Mike McBride to go back on a friend so long as a friend didn't go back on him?"

In truth, it was no idle boast.

"Oh, I have no uneasiness on that score," Corlis assured him. "But—but—it looks bad, McBride—"

"By God, squirmin' won't help you none, Corlis," swore the Boss viciously. "Get down to bizness; quit foolin'!—Do you want to be elected or don't you? And if you're wantin' me behind you,—you've got to deliver the goods."

The candidate took eighteen hours to consider. Then he signed a political promissory note, which the genial McBride deposited in the fire-proof safe in Gard Brown's office.

Governor Ransom was out upon the stump by the first week in October. He had never talked so directly—he talked with crowds as he might have talked to a single man—he took them into his deepest confidence; figuratively, he "button-holed" each audience. And the people responded. The mistrust they had regretted, but were compelled to reserve against him as a past-master of practical politics, disappeared; they instinctively felt that this time he was sincere, that he had no

axe to grind; that, indeed, he was venturing all he had, all his future, for the truth as he saw it. There was established, from the first, between Governor Ransom and the people a sympathy which might speedily develop into devotion on his part and confirmed trust on theirs. It became apparent at once to discerning men that never in his life had the Governor been so dangerous as he now was.

There was good reason enough. For the first time in his life was that skeptical intellect wholly convinced; for the first time were his powerful personal passions associated, by accident or good-fortune, with a great principle; for the first time was the cause he pleaded free from the suspicion of sinister influence, and the canvass he made divorced from desire for spoils. Therefore did Randolph Ransom stand suddenly revealed in all the great unrestrained powers of his intellect and personality, and he dealt blows that crushed.

Immense crowds heard him.

"Shall Illinois become a western New York or Pennsylvania?" is what he asked of them. "Shall the Republican Tammany of the Black Boss of Chicago rivet collars on the necks of the honest farmers and plain people of Abe Lincoln's state?" was the way he hammered the issue home. And whatever he had learned of the art of persuading and arousing men during twenty

years' practice of the profession of practical politics, he used now. No prejudice but what he touched into hostility; no popular misconception that he did not arm. He talked the vernacular. But at rare times his force and fierceness fired his speech into such purity and dignity, that, in unconscious accord, all the demagogic accessories he loved so well were forgotten, and, as if despite himself, Governor Ransom became a moral leader.

In the fervid heat generated by this stir of forces and clash of men, the organization battle lines of Corlis and McBride shriveled like long grass in a Nebraska drought. From every point the appeal went up to Republican headquarters for assistance, and each appeal ended with a prayer for " just one speech in our district from Senator Dawes."

" He is the only leader the people will listen to after Governor Ransom," the appeals generally wailed. " One blast upon his bugle-horn is worth ten thousand men," they quoted frequently.

The Senator was already gone upon the stump. But he seemed no longer the old " Uncle Simeon." To McBride's urgent request that he " camp on Ransom's trail," he responded evasively; there was no hurrying him, and his set speeches seemed perfunctory.

Whether the State Central Committee appealed to Washington, is not known. However, Senator

Dawes did receive an intimation from the President; a close friend of the Administration traveled to Aurora, where the Senator was to speak.

"The Republican party is in danger," was the pith of the exhortation from Washington; the President insists the party must be saved in Illinois; the issue is not a mere state issue. If the Democrats win in Illinois upon the issue as devised by Governor Ransom, that issue will become the national issue two years hence. If Senator Dawes will be induced to shake off his apathy and will lead the party to an old-time victory, the Administration will see to it that every influence is directed to aid in reëlecting him Senator."

The wish of the President sufficed; Senator Dawes bestirred himself. The word from Washington made of it an Administration fight, attached national significance to a local election. The Senator himself became the President's representative, and he took pains to make it clear that he was not obeying the behest of "the Corlis-McBride combine." He was transformed in a night; he made a ringing speech—announced his intention of following Ransom up. He was once more the leader of his party.

Circumstances conspired to resolve it into an old-fashioned campaign. The people were aroused; discussion became general; interest waxed hot. Money and manipulation, the weapons of

organization, while effective still, were so only at the minimum; argument, eloquence and personality proved again of weight. The politician of the old debating days, skilled at the dialectics of the stump, acquainted with the temper of the people, at least half of him a statesman, came into vogue again for the remainder of that unique campaign.

Like a crafty general, Senator Dawes refused to batter Ransom's front. He was silent upon corporations and he affected to make light of the Electrical Consolidated as a mere local scandal, if it did not turn out a manufactured lie. He proclaimed Silver and Bimetallism to be the issue of the campaign, an issue so broad and so important that no municipal question could obscure, no charge of corruption usurp its place. Let the citizens of Chicago settle their own affairs; the voters of the state had far larger matters to engage their concern.

Seemingly "Uncle Simeon" had turned the enemy's flank. The threat of Free Silver and cheap money alarmed the conservative and commercial classes, while respectability in general, though shocked by the exposure of *The Pundit*, eyed Ransom askance for his record in the past, and was unattracted, if not shocked, by the savagery of his denunciations. The peril of corporate corruption paled in comparison with the peril of demagoguery and of a dishonest dollar.

If the Senator made a mistake, it consisted in his neglect of the pretense of consulting the Chicago Boss. Necessity alone had compelled him to be cordial to McBride at the time of the Convention. When the developments wrested the directorship of the campaign from the Boss, the Senator assumed that he, himself, had been put back into his old leadership and that McBride was no longer a factor, savory or unsavory, that must be considered.

The neglect hurt McBride, who, at heart, admired the old statesman. His Celtic susceptibility, decisive enough where the business of the Cook County Organization was not involved, inclined him to seek favor where he admired; but, as it was, the Senatorial aloofness thrust him back upon Corlis.

By the middle of October the campaign had attained a furious pace. The issue had emerged sharply and already the result in part was anticipated. Chicago would go heavily Republican; there for once "the machine" and "the better element," like congenial yoke-fellows, pulled together, the former inspired by hope of plunder, the latter animated by a fear of worthless money. It was as certain that all Egypt would swing into line for Ransom and his cause.

The battleground, the disputed territory, lay between these two extremes of the state. There

Senator Dawes had always been strong, and therein he was now pleading, arguing, persuading, by day and by night. There, also, Governor Ransom ranged, applying the torch of vituperation to the dry brush of discontent, making specious pleas interspersed with snatches of almost sublime appeal.

It was a combat of political giants. The last fortnight it narrowed to a duel between the two, and the rest of the state hushed its controversy to hearken to the clashings of their swords. Not since the day of Douglas and Lincoln had a debate so interested the people in Illinois as did this dramatic encounter between Senator Simeon E. Dawes and Governor Randolph Ransom.

XLIII

WITH J. J. J.'s EYES

MRS. CORLIS, that season at Newport and later at Lenox, led "the whirl." She gathered the fruits of years of social struggle and devotion. The first years had obtained her recognition; the last brought her power; now she enjoyed almost supremacy. All the policy, the tact, the intellectual charm she had inherited from one side, together with the will to dominate and the ability to manage she had drawn from the other, had been squandered in an effort to conquer, and then to maintain. Yet more, in the midst of the astonishing frivolity of this, her last summer, she even accused herself, in those secret confessions in which she indulged, of having spent upon society the precious treasures of her soul and the ideals of her mind.

Yet never, apparently, had she been so absorbed in society. She spent money like water; she entertained fabulously; she "managed" amusement with the ingenuity of a Barnum, the executive power of a railway president, and the aesthetic sense of a landscape gardener. She adopted the vernacular of the "smart set" and resumed their

set of ideas. "Society" was unquestionably the salt of all America, the savor of sixty million people. As for the people, they were proletariat, "the great unwashed," a vulgar democracy, whose antics were amusing, whose spasms were childish, though some day, no doubt, the same might prove dangerous. What a pity Hamilton's notion of the necessity for an aristocracy had not originally prevailed, instead of Jefferson's conception of the divinity of the mob.

Yet these platitudes irritated her, this pose often excited her scorn. Mrs. Corlis would surprise herself by applying to the conditions at hand the observations she had learned from an Illinois spoils politician and a Chicago reporter. She noted, likewise, in herself, the persistent recrudescence of the Puritan, and she vaguely resented the borrowed Anglican terms of depreciation, "dissent" and "dissenters," which the High Church so glibly bestowed.

The noise of the conflict in Illinois, more and more reverberating throughout the Union, became the topic in society along with the last bit of gossip. They deferred to her political knowledge; they affirmed she came of a "political family," and, indeed, were disposed to plume themselves upon the political influence possessed by a woman of themselves. It was not unlike the function fulfilled by a political duchess in England.

This form of adulation pursued her constantly, and she was always answering questions about the nature and significance of the struggle. The universal interest in the Illinois campaign proved its dramatic quality, and, whether she would or no, she was forced to consider it.

Thereby came intervals, when, despite herself, the politician in her revived, when her fancy turned from dance and dinner to the prairies of "the woolly West," where unregenerate men were sparring for grips upon one another's throats, where her father fought with his back against the wall, where boss and spoilsman wrestled for sake of power and office and pride and hate. Beside the starkness of that fight, the intrigues in the exclusive set seemed somewhat tame.

As the struggle narrowed to the consummation, willy-nilly her growing interest followed it. The final duel between her father and her first lover—if its melodrama served to fix the attention of the nation, how absorbingly it captured her! She was proud for them both. The passionate onslaughts of Ransom thrilled the strenuous chords in her own soul's harp. What a knight-errant of error, what a dark champion of evil, what a gladiator for despair was he! And her father—his figure loomed large in the land; he was proved of the stature of a statesman; he was equal with Clay and Seward and Conkling.

She grew greatly anxious about him, moreover; she was concerned for his nerves and his endurance. She had perceived at Primrose Hill that he was, indeed, an old man. So, when the combat had developed into a debate, when the last fortnight's battle of the giants opened, all America looking on, she moved to an abrupt resolution. Why be bored insufferably at Lenox, when she could as well be "in at the death" in Illinois; why worry for her father's health at a distance, when she might watch over it at his side?

She telegraphed her uncle up at his place in New Hampshire that she was going West to her father. J. J. J. answered in three hours, saying he would go with her, and bidding her meet him in Springfield.

He had both his private cars, the "Swiftsure" for himself, the "Victoria" for her. With a baggage-car ahead they made up a special train to go through to Chicago.

Uncle Johnny was very glad to see his niece again, and Mrs. Corlis, resigning herself gratefully into his hands, became again a child, enjoyed the luxury of dependence and exercised the prerogative of weakness, the tyranny of caprice and fondness.

She asked him why he, also, was going to Chicago.

"Because my little Vicky wants me to, and

because I want to be with her," the old man answered, sentimentally.

They were walking up and down the station platform, his arm in hers, her shoulders even with his head.

Later, on the train, he explained more sensibly.

"Thought I might as well. I don't know anything; but I'm uneasy. There's something's got loose out there, I feel; some board's sprung and the wind whines in the break."

She smiled; she was not unfamiliar with J. J. J.'s divinations, his Scotch second sight. He rather professed the infallibility of the power, himself; but she had shrewdly observed the power was not invoked when affairs of profit or problems of organization were involved.

However, J. J. J. returned frequently to "the thing that's got loose" during the progress of their westward journey.

"Vicky, they've got to dig if they're going to fool the old man," he asseverated. "They may think the old man ain't up to snuff—those fellows who feel their oats just a bit may. But, Vicky, the old man has saved a few tricks yet—keeps 'em up his sleeve for the special benefit of smart Alecs. The old man worms in until he reaches the inside of whatever he goes into; they can't lose him, those fellows. All games are one game, Vicky, politics like the rest, and if a man can play

one, he can play another. Watch me play at politics, when I get out among 'em, Vicky, watch me!"

She inquired what he thought of *The Pundit's* exposure of the Electrical Consolidated scheme; would it operate to defeat the Senator's reëlection?

"I don't know, Vicky, that ain't in my line," he answered, his eyes glittering. "There's one thing, though, and that you can hold to—everything's going to be brought to bear to push him through. No skull-duggery's going to be allowed and that it sha'n't, I'm going to be on the spot to see."

"Do you think Walter will pull through?"

"How should I know? But I'm going to hint to him that the Senator's the main tent in this circus and that he's a side-show."

The special train traveled westward at great speed. It climbed the Berkshires and crossed the Hudson. It rolled New York state's length through, the gateway of a continent. It sighted Lake Erie and whirled across the Indiana prairies. It took the curve of Michigan's blunt end and bored into the smoky pall that sits upon Chicago.

Although the two were singularly devoted, it happened that they had not been alone together on a journey for years. The chance delighted J. J. J.; he talked and talked.

"It's my innings, I guess," is what he said, and hours long he showed her things as he saw them; all day long did he discourse, pointing out what they went by.

She saw cities on rivers and on lakes and on railways; she saw tracks and factories and wharves and grain elevators; she saw, or divined, in detail and in whole, the movements of commerce and the output of industry. She saw the enormity of the thing; she perceived, vaguely, the epic it constituted for J. J. J. And, interested, she pressed him for accounts of his own schemes; she asked for a sketch of his plans in the West. And, lo, she was deluged with railways and mines, new cities and great ocean steamers, the conquest of the Pacific and the trade with Alaska and the East.

She was stunned, but her imagination took wings. She wondered why all these years she had been so stupid. To employ a vulgar term, Uncle Johnny had figured always in her mind as "the provider," and that, besides, he constituted the refuge she had against all her disillusions did not render him, in her eyes, less prosaic. True, he had talked to her before, but either she had not heard or else he had not talked as he did now. Now, she felt, she was admitted a space into his mind: it was like standing just inside the doorway, watching the dynamos, the engines, the gigan-

tic wheels, the delicate mechanism, the thrust of steel arms, and feeling under one's feet the throb of the titanic force of the whole.

Thence she passed to some comprehension of his patriotism, whose intensity she had been wont to attribute to the fact of his primitiveness, to his lack of "culture." She got his point of view: she understood how America was the greatest country of the earth to him: why he scorned "dudes" and could not be induced to visit her at Newport; why, also, he was interested in a steel-mill more than in a picture and in a city of men more than in a drama; how it was the possibilities of Niagara, as power harnessed and delivered, should set him in a quiver.

So, seeing with his eyes, she saw America in reality for the first time in her life. The spectacles of "culture," those of pseudo-refinement, of "society," were lifted from her nose. That journey had displayed before her the most modern of developments, the most enormous and complex material movement in history—the activity of the lakes and seaboard, on a line from New York to Chicago. And the master-mind, the great man, the true hero of the age, was an old man, gnome-shapen, big-eared, with grayish-streaked, straight hair, who sat near her and interpreted the signs to her, as the train glided past towns and chimneys and power-houses and depots and plants.

The new revelation explained much. It explained her own unconfessed condemnation of what Newport represented, which she had never been able to justify in words. Newport was a perversion, an exotic. The Japanese use the tree's force to grow monstrously shaped fruit; so Newport, with all the strength of America to use, refuses to express the true bloom and fragrance of the plant, but distorts itself into a hybrid imitation of an alien fruit—a fruit, moreover, that is rotting on the feudal tree, an infirm tree of an inferior species.

"Family" summed up the perversion; it was the fetish of "society." Its reiteration before this had bored Mrs. Corlis insufferably; with her new lights, she wondered why wealth and power should possess this shame of itself and insist on borrowing a skirt of "family" to drape itself in. Were not wealth and power sufficient; was not the modern man to the feudal man as a skilled craftsman to a ditch-digger? The maker of railways, the master of electricity, the creator of "trusts," hardly needed mediæval castles and pennons and crests. The idea should occasion a smile.

Family! America hitherto had not cherished families; she developed men—men the most forehanded, ingenious, determined, the world had ever seen. It was a new type, the modern type, the dominating type. Yet Newport apologized to

Europe for America, deplored the crudity, the newness.

New? Nay, it was an original departure America had made. Realist, the word Chris Ruggles had used, recurred to her mind. That was it, Americans were realists, more than merely practical. As religion, or glory, or grace had formed the ideal for old-world civilizations, so science was the sovereign most potent in America. Her institutions fostered realism; the impedimenta of other nations had dropped at the beginning. America marched free. The traditional tyrannies, the absurdities of word and custom were abolished: neither churches nor castes nor the abstractions that frightened fools a thousand years, had captured the logical thought-factories of pedants and doctrinaires, and secured the loyalty and assent of ignorance, existed here. But the attainments of great men, the teaching of sages, the aspirations of truth-lovers, were all garnered here. Such were common possessions.

The aristocracy of the mind of the world had entered into the composition of America, had brought democracy to birth. One nation had been forged by an unjust conqueror, another by a muddle headed priest, a third by a subtle-lying diplomat. But America, untrammeled, sane, realistic, grounded on foundations more sound than any

that ever yet upheld a nation, would overwhelm the world and touch the stars at last.

Mrs. Corlis did not stop to see her husband in Chicago, although J. J. J. himself did. She went on in the car "Victoria" to find her father, down the state.

XLIV

ONE-MAN POWER

THE crowds that listened to Senator Dawes the last fortnight of the campaign, saw always, near the speaker, sitting, in fact, next the chair from which he had arisen, a woman with white hair and intense dark eyes. They called her a "lady." They noted with what interest, even anxiety, she followed the speaker; how her solicitous gaze never left him and how her look cheered, whenever the orator scored a telling point to which the audience responded with applause. At such moments, very often, in the enforced interval while his voice was useless against the uproar, the Senator would be seen to half turn and search for her eyes. He would smile when he found them, and she might smile, or even nod, in response, or sometimes her beautiful eyes would fill quickly and two drops would course down her cheeks.

It was a touching bit of by-play, and the cynics affirmed that it "worked." The crowd generally knew who she was, or were informed; they had read in their papers that their old Uncle Simeon's daughter, the brilliant Mrs. Corlis, had journeyed

from Newport to travel with her father, while he stumped the state; they had heard of her private car which she had put at her father's disposal; and they knew she was there to take care of the Senator and to see that he took care of himself. The sight of such filial devotion touched their sentiment; unquestionably it made voters. Was it not pathetic—the old man overcoming his age to battle manfully with his enemies, while his devoted only daughter hung upon his words and watched vigilantly for the signs of exhaustion.

When a speech was finished, she was the first upon her feet, by his side, asking how he felt, holding his hands. She would make him sit down at once, or even insist that he be driven immediately to the hotel or the car. When he shook hands, standing to receive all who filed past him, she always stood next him, on the left hand; she was cordial to saint and sinner alike—they all had votes—but she kept an eye on her father even while she received or dispensed a compliment. The Senator, at such times, appeared old-fashioned and homely, abrupt and awkward, but exuded from every pore the pure milk of human kindness. Only as he pronounced the words, "My daughter," did pride stiffen his manner; then the plain citizen, who had been flattered or conciliated by the old man's unassuming cordiality, owned himself completely conquered by the

distinguished woman's queenly condescension. Thus was the bird potted twice.

Truth to tell, Mrs. Corlis walked into popularity or notoriety without knowing it; she became one of the "features" of the campaign. She was plainly garbed in gray, a gray traveling gown and a gray hat with a gray feather. She looked rather tired and her long face was thin; only the dark eyes showed her interest—they and the eager bend of her tall figure towards her father as he spoke. Indeed, some pathos joined them, the father and daughter—perhaps the shadow of the Unknown which lay upon them both; nor was the wary old politician slow to use and to heighten subtly the effect.

Mrs. Corlis by the end of the first week felt relieved; she was convinced that the tide was running strongly with her father. The crowds were so immense and the enthusiasm so fervent that she found it impossible to associate such portents with defeat. However, she was aware that the Senator was not sanguine; he seemed to realize the necessity for desperate fighting to the last hour of the campaign.

"No, daughter," he admitted, "there's nothing in sight to complain of. But you must remember the cheers of the crowds are not the ballots of the people, necessarily. The other fellow is never

beaten until the day of election is over, and mebbe not then."

"But they all seem to know you; they are so fond and so proud of you, Pater."

His fine head was thrown back a moment, just as a war-horse in action may arch his proud neck. Yet he said sadly, "Ah, I wonder, I wonder. At times it seems like the old days. But it isn't. And mebbe I am not abreast of the times—perhaps I ought to be dead. This is a new generation I'm addressing; a new generation with new needs, new aspirations, new prejudices, Vicky."

He looked askance at her, wistfully, to discover if in her mind she could deny that truth.

She sighed.

"Well, if you do not understand them, Pater, who does? I hardly fancy Boss McBride can, or —or Walter either."

"There's Ransom,"—she started at the name —"he may."

The Senator was pacing the motionless car.

"I read Randolph's speeches each morning; and it has struck me, do you know, that while I am talking about the past, he is talking about the future. We may pull ourselves through by the skin of our teeth this time—but, Vicky," he stopped to turn to her directly, "Ransom has us, and he knows it. This campaign is more than

likely to make him the Democratic nominee for President two years from now."

The old man shook his head.

"They say Ransom's a practical politician," he mused aloud; "so was Lincoln, and Lincoln was defeated two years before he was nominated."

However, the sight of the crowds had convinced Mrs. Corlis that all was well; nor was she troubled about the future, if only she could see her father reëlected this time. But the Senator had interested her doubly in Governor Ransom, and she went to Christopher Ruggles to learn more. The reporter had just joined them for *The Pundit,* having previously been well over the state with the Governor.

"What I think, Mrs. Corlis, I have put in *The Pundit,*" Chris answered. "As I have said all along, I believe the people are stirred up to the depths this time."

"But how do you account for the enthusiasm we encounter?" she persisted.

"If the issue were simply whether Senator Dawes is to be returned to the Senate, there could be but one outcome," he said, frankly. "But it is a much more involved question than merely the great hold the Senator has upon the people of Illinois."

Mrs. Corlis experienced a rare moment of petulance.

"I can't believe it; I can see for myself," she said, tapping a foot.

"Excuse me," begged Chris, a pained look in his honest eyes.

Magnanimity flooded back into her face.

"Ah, it is I who am at fault; I beg your pardon, Chris. Do I not know you are sincere and that you never flatter? How susceptible the most earnest of us are and how we all do dislike plain truth. But tell me, is Governor Ransom satisfied for himself?"

"I do not know. When the man is not a whirlwind, he's a sphinx."

"But are his meetings enthusiastic like ours?"

"Yes."

"Even more so?"

"At least quite as much so."

Chris showed both his reluctance to confess the truth under this inquisition, and his aversion to coloring the truth falsely. Mrs. Corlis laughed.

"Chris, I think I will learn for myself. Can you take me some night to one of his meetings? Let me see, he speaks for the last time in Peoria next Saturday night; we speak there in the afternoon at the Fair Grounds, and he speaks in the evening at the Rink."

It was a crisp autumn night; but the dense crowd in the Rink had fouled the air. A cloud of tobacco smoke drifted through the vast enclosed

space above the vociferous heads of the sovereign voters of America. Ruggles had secured seats in the box reserved for "The Press," and therein Mrs. Corlis was seated, not ten feet from the low platform, nor much above the plane of the presiding chairman's head.

Governor Ransom had been speaking for half an hour. At the moment he was sketching the early history of America, summing up, in his own fashion, some aspects of the Revolution. He was saying,

"It is a mistake to suppose the Revolution the mere revolt of oppressed ignorance, the revenge of the vile, the retaliation of tortured wretches; our Revolution was no French Revolution. No, the Republic was conceived in the womb of wisdom and delivered through the pangs of the purest and loftiest of mankind. A race of freemen, who from time immemorial had been free, who were led by philosophers and sages, resolved to put into granite, to embody in sovereign institutions what was in their mind and of their bone, what was their ideal, what seemed to them absolute justice and eternal freedom. Our Republic is the evolution of the centuries; is the consummation of mankind's best thought and truest aspiration; is the approximation to the visions of great men from Plato the Athenian to Milton the Puritan."

Mrs. Corlis, where she listened, had presented to her eyes the profile of the orator. The face was deadly thin, worn down by the work of the campaign and by the passion of his oratory. But the wasting had erased the last lines of excess and smoothed the swellings of dissipation; the purification of great chastisement and the responsibility of a great undertaking had both clarified the features and illumined the expression. The tall figure was slighter and its bones seemed more visible; the long arms worked like pistons as he spoke. Yet somehow the man was beautiful; the profile's delicate hardness was cut like a classic cameo, and the irritable dark eyes glowed, occasionally flashed into flame.

Ransom was lifted involuntarily, as it were, by the swell of the great subject with which he dealt; for two minutes he was splendid; for one moment, divine. As he recited the glory and beauty of the Republic his speech, perforce, became refined; the vernacular gave place to the classical; the sentences of Cicero and Chatham and Webster were reborn. The poet in the man, and the angel, which *she* knew were there, transformed his poor utterance and transfigured his meagre form. He veritably lifted the multitude with himself to the crest of his inspiration. The last words furrowed the mind, and lingered in the ear:

"The Republic is the sweetest hope of human-

ity; its existence atones for the past, is the dawn of the future!"

The orator paused, shaken with his own thunder. There were cheers—cataracts of cheers. In the midst of that pandemonium his circling glance crossed the gaze of the woman—it seemed to her his eyes flashed recognition, pride of triumph a moment, then alienation and sadness or something akin. But an instant; for he turned and stalked along the front of the platform to the farther end, seeking an opening to begin afresh. But the crowd would not have it; applause renewed itself and increased; the people bawled forth their endorsement.

But that brief moment had sufficed. In it Mrs. Corlis was convinced that she had seen through the windows into the dark privacy of a lonely soul. At least, so she thought. She realized his life and she pitied him. He had suffered for years what only intensity such as his suffers and endures; he had been proudly solitary, abjectly forlorn, desolate and desperate at heart. That life struggle of his had been silent and constant and grim; it had made him bitter and unbelieving and hard; utter loneliness had driven him to gambling and drink, rendered him perverse, engaged him in wrong causes, enlisted him in forlorn hopes. As Uncle Johnny had observed at the Convention, it was nerves; he must forget himself, strain his facul-

ties so far that consciousness ceased to ache. To achieve that it needed whisky or poker or a campaign such as this.

So the woman interpreted after woman's fashion, romantically.

Meantime, Ransom had settled to another tack:

"Our Republic," he cried, "so great as it is, in its beginning, its aspirations, its achievements, its yet further promise, is now sordidly menaced. The South once manfully assailed it, hammered it heroically and honorably. The warfare of brave men it could resist. Can it resist the conspiracy of cowards, the undermining of money-changers, the corruption of Shylocks? That is the question!"

The man was again transformed, become a demon. The eyes glared with hate; the thin, flexible lips curled back like a dog's in his fury. Every muscle in his face was awork, the mask which had been as the calm sublimity of a bust of Augustus, become now a writhing confusion of passions let loose. He hit right and left. The crowd liked it well. He left argument and abstractions; he ignored party and program to reach home to the men who ruled the party and proposed the program. Personalities were his theme; nor did he spare Senator Dawes this time, but imputed bluntly to the latter the cowardice of old age and the

willingness to compromise characteristic of the confirmed office-holder.

"Behold," Ransom cried, "the friend and pupil of Lincoln become the Senatorial page of J. J. Jarrett, Esquire! What a fall is there, my countrymen!"

Then, with a sneer, he named W. H. D. Corlis. The building itself quaked beneath the explosion of howls, hisses and execrations.

Ruggles screamed close to Mrs. Corlis' ear,

"Had we not better get out before we get caught in the crowd at the end?"

She nodded assent.

She leaned back in the darkness of the carriage gratefully. Her escort left her alone; he fancied her deeply hurt and would give her time to recover her poise.

But what she was thinking, or rather feeling, he could not have surmised.

"What a man, what a waste! So much power, so much intellect, so much passion, gone but to furnish another demagogue! Would it still have been so, I wonder, had it been different? Could a woman have kept him sane, could she have pruned him, held him, made the best master in him—could she, some woman he loved, the woman he loved? As it is, he has been a mere lonely rebel all his life, when he was designed for a great, positive force. Ah, me, I wonder how

much of that's true, and would I, if I had life to live over, would I choose differently? How I do pity him! But life—it is bound to be a tragedy, no matter what in it we choose."

The carriage had already approached the hotel before Mrs. Corlis, emerging from her reverie, spoke to Ruggles.

"Thank you, Chris. You have convinced me; it is a wave. There's small chance for opportunist politics, when opposed to such original force as we've just seen."

"I am sorry for you, Mrs. Corlis," said the reporter, moved by he knew not what sympathy.

"Yes, Chris," she placed a hand on his arm, "yes, but it was a mighty exhibition, was it not? For myself, I never knew what one-man power amounted to before."

"You should not underestimate the force of the wave he rides, Mrs. Corlis. It is not all Governor Ransom."

XLV

A SNEAKING CHIVALRY

MRS. CORLIS on her arrival at the hotel changed her gown for a dressing robe before she sought her father in the room adjoining her own.

She found him gay, or at any rate, superficially so; glad because responsibility was over and the active campaign closed. If he concealed an anxiety concerning the issue of the next Tuesday, for the hour, at least, the Senator was as playful in mood as a boy newly let loose from school.

He talked of Primrose Hill and of nothing else. They were going down to the place next morning, intending to spend there the intervening days until the election had been determined. He joked about it as "the Sabine farm." He quoted Horace. He babbled of the river, his green crops and the old dogs. He would not hear of politics.

A knock upon the door.

"If that's any danged politician, Vicky, I'm asleep or something equally as good."

His daughter nodded as she glided across the room. She shut the door again, turning the key.

"Only an envelope, Pater, with your name on

it." She balanced it on her hand. "Let us wait until morning to open it."

"I guess I'll see what it's like," said the Senator. He took the long yellow envelope she brought to him. "Umph, this is marked 'Immediate and Important.' I wonder if it just is or just isn't," he added whimsically.

"Of course not," Mrs. Corlis decided. Somehow she occultly feared the envelope. "It's just some nothing, some office-seeker, some big bore, anyhow. We'll let it go until morning, or—until after election."

Senator Dawes sighed resignedly.

"I hope it is not some summons that will spoil our vacation, at all events, Vicky. It may be important; I'll just dispose of it."

He tore open the envelope and extracted a sheet of yellow telegraph paper. He read, and his daughter read with him, over his shoulder:

"Christopher Ruggles,
"Harpster Hotel, Peoria.

"*Pundit* publishes Sunday verified story of Corlis-McBride conspiracy to knife legislative ticket in Chicago and state to aid head of ticket. Show Senator Dawes immediately.

(Signed) "MacPherson."

Both stared dumfounded at the yellow sheet. At last she put a firm hand on his shoulder and asked as steadily as she could:

"Do you believe it is possible, Pater; can it be true?"

"Mac never lies knowingly," was the succinct response.

"But he may be mistaken occasionally."

"He's never mistaken; that's the joke of it." The Senator laughed, a dry, hard, small laugh.

"But you can't believe—you can't think, that Walter could consent to such a low-down trick against you."

He freed his shoulder from her hand and got upon his feet.

"Oh, there's nothing so mean that men will not do it." He shook himself irritably. "I've been forty years in politics, and do you suppose I retain any illusions about men?" He began abruptly to pace the room. "Honor or obligation—they are things men believe in before an exigency tries them, and then they are things men prate about as they do of their lost youth and their lost love."

"But, father, you are saying terrible things."

"So I am," he declared recklessly; then he added more softly: "but you must bear, Victoria, with a beaten old man." He stopped and she saw his face—it was ashen and hollow and bitterly ashamed. "The truth must out some time, and, if a man will but study them long enough, he will come to have no more belief in his fellows than he has in himself."

At that he set off again to walk the room; his head sagged down to his breast and his lips twitched.

Mrs. Corlis stood rooted behind the chair in which he had read the telegram. She leaned on its back and stared with unseeing eyes.

Presently the Senator resumed speaking, although he did not stop in his walk, but on the contrary augmented the rate of his steps.

"You went to hear Ransom to-night, Victoria? I guessed it. Tell me, what did he say? Did he attack me personally? I surmised he might have said something bitter from the way you acted when you came back. What was it? he did not impugn my honor or charge that I had broken my word or anything of that sort, did he?"

"Why, father—"

"You may as well tell me the round truth, Victoria."

"He did attack you. I fancy you would call it that. I did not stay to hear all he said, but as much as I heard was much more against Walter than against you.—No, he did not even imply anything of the kind you suggest."

Senator Dawes emitted a great sigh of relief.

"Good, good!" he muttered. Then he explained: "I've always regarded Randolph, had an affection for him, in fact, something as if he were my own son. And he might have imagined

—to tell the truth he's had ample excuse for imagining—you see, I promised him at Primrose Hill I'd let him know, I'd tell him if there was, or was to be, any corporation franchise scheme behind Corlis' nomination. And he learned there was from *The Pundit,* not from me. I've been in politics most a lifetime, and, the Lord knows, a fellow can't be squeamish; but I'd hate to have Randolph Ransom think I lied to him. Ransom never lied to his friends—that's one thing he never did."

He dropped himself mournfully into a chair and drooped his venerable head.

His daughter watched pityingly, too absorbed in her pity to think of asking questions.

"Cheer up," she bade after a bit. "We'll go up to Chicago to-morrow, father. Uncle Johnny is there and he'll straighten things out for us. His heart's set on your reëlection and when we tell him, he will find out the truth, and we'll let him deal with Walter and Mr. McBride."

Senator Dawes looked up surprised, but with face partly cleared.

"Oh, if you say so, Victoria, your uncle will put the screws on that combination as no one else can."

"Then he shall, father."

In the morning, however, Senator Dawes declared he meant to go to Primrose Hill instead of to Chicago; he had changed his mind overnight.

If Victoria still thought it would do any good, she could go on herself to the city; indeed, it might be she would have more influence with her uncle alone. As for himself, the Senator was satisfied he was beaten; he was convinced MacPherson's news was authentic, and the chances were ninety-nine out of a hundred that it was now too late to reverse the engine, even if Corlis and McBride were to be persuaded or coerced into attempting it. MacPherson had always treated him with respect, said the Senator, and the editor had meant him a kindness by sending him a warning to stand out from under.

The inducements which had decided him to this course seemed sufficiently plausible; yet Mrs. Corlis was puzzled by an odd change in her father's demeanor. She caught him at intervals stealing anxious glances at her, as if he wished to discover, furtively, whether she possessed either knowledge or an opinion of something—what, she could not define.

One of his first questions had been:

"Vicky, have you seen the morning papers?"

"Why, Pater, you know I seldom read the papers," she had answered in surprise. Was it fancy, or did he look relieved?

The car "Victoria" they found at the station ready to be attached to the morning train for Chicago, when the latter arrived. Senator Dawes

meant to go with his daughter as far as Ottawa, where he would take a branch road for Primrose Hill.

Mrs. Corlis seated herself aboard the car at an open window. She liked the crisp autumn air and she could watch her father on the far end of the platform, surrounded by a little knot of sympathetic politicians. To her they seemed rather disconsolate. She felt sick at heart; on that radiant Sunday morning politics seemed to her inexpressibly dirty. She surmised, philosophically, that business was quite as much so when viewed from within, and she, herself, had experienced kindred disgusts about society. This morning, however, politics appeared worse than any other of the human activities, more base, more reptilian. Besides disgust there was anger, concrete and active. She had borne all things from her husband; this she would not bear. She would not sit quiet while he played the smug traitor to her father; she would appeal directly to Uncle Johnny and have him set matters right with a high hand.

Was not that Chris Ruggles whom she spied yonder on the platform, standing by himself and watching the movement? No doubt he had come down to the station to see if her father got off on the train without incident. Catching his eye finally, she beckoned him, and as he came forward she smiled her pleasure; his honest plainness, his open

eyes, seemed so good to her, so sound and beautiful. A draught of spring water is elixir after a night of wine.

"Do you believe it, Chris?"

She referred to the telegram he had sent up to them last night in the hotel.

"I am afraid I can't believe otherwise, Mrs. Corlis," he answered.

"How is our Valkyr?" she asked suddenly.

A painful flush suffused all his rugged face between his brown hair and reddish beard.

"I hardly know," he said reluctantly; "I have not seen her for months."

Divination enlightened her in a flash.

"You do not mean, Chris, since the time *The Pundit* exposed the Electric Consolidated scheme? You did not quarrel because you warned me?"

"No, Mrs. Corlis, it was not that," he stammered. Then unable to say more he looked up in her face with what woe in his eyes, what misery, what heart-loneliness.

"Chris, my poor boy," she murmured impulsively.

"Oh," he burst forth, "you don't know what I suffer. I don't know what to think, much less to do."

"Do? Why, go back to her—be a man!" she bade instantly. "If you suffer, think of her, how

much must she suffer. Chris, she is worse off than you."

"How can I, Mrs. Corlis? Is there any man would?" Again he expressed his bare soul in his eyes. "It's true I love her; I've found that out. But, as you guess—you may know—I've—I've learned about her—it's her past, years ago in her past."

"Chris, do not judge—don't dare judge!" She reached her hand from the window to clasp his own. "Who are you to arraign any woman—you, a man? The people who framed the moralities, I'm sure, Chris, never were men of the world; a heaven they might have known, but this earth, never."

He struck the toe of his solid shoe against a crack in the boards of the platform.

"As a generalization," he said, perplexed in his soreness, "that's all very well, Mrs. Corlis; but it hardly reaches when—when one's self is a specific case."

"Chris," she ventured boldly, "you know who I am—the wife of the man who—you know what I mean."

He quivered and gave her a tortured look.

"Yet you trust me, despite that; you confide all. Why?"

"Because you can be trusted; because you are singularly noble and true."

"Yet I am all, am I not, that you naturally condemn. I am rich, I am fashionable, I am frivolous, not to mention whose name I bear or whose ambition I forward or what business I manage."

"Nevertheless, Mrs. Corlis, you and she are the noblest souls I have ever known in this world."

"There, you've confessed it, Chris. I know this world, I've had experience, if ever a woman in America has had. And I tell you, Chris, it is not a man's or a woman's innocence or sin, their repentance or their downfall, their alleged saint-hood or their apparent criminality, not even what they've done or will do—it's themselves that count. As people are born they remain, I've found out—nothing cures them, nothing debases them. A mean soul is a mean soul perpetually; a noble soul is elect, yes, even if it has been dragged in the mire and broken under the wheels of this world."

He had listened reverently, but now he looked up with a smile, and half timidly ventured,

"That, Mrs. Corlis, is John Calvin modernized."

"I don't know and I don't care, Chris Ruggles. It may not be found in the Scriptures, but it is eternal truth torn from the hard stone of life by my own bleeding fingers."

This deliverance she had flashed. She added more softly,

"Go back to that sorrowing woman, Chris Ruggles—go back, if ever you want to be more than a prig or a slave to a code for the code's sake. Remember, Chris, what I say, for it is possible you may not see me again."

"Oh, I hope not," began Chris confusedly.

"There is Governor Ransom," she interrupted. "Is he leaving this morning, too?"

"Yes, he is going down to Egypt," explained the reporter. "He will go through as much of it as possible like a whirlwind Monday. I'm going along for *The Pundit.*"

"Chris, you know him—go ask him to step here a moment—tell him Mrs. Corlis wants to speak to him."

The Governor was joking with a knot of admirers in a characteristically undignified manner. She saw him turn abruptly when Chris spoke, and she fancied that a look of rather dismayed surprise appeared in his face. Immediately he excused himself to his friends. The reporter pointed out the car to him and he walked towards her. Although he passed Senator Dawes and that group within ten feet, no salutations were exchanged.

Governor Ransom approached the car window with a smile that was a grin on his worn face. She suspected it was for a mask. The dark eyes, shot with steel blue, she saw were curious. She noticed, also, how completely gray the hair above

the high temples had turned since she had seen him last.

"How d' do, Mrs. Corlis," he greeted her in homely fashion. "It seems to have turned out some different from what we expected, but that can't be helped, I guess."

The thin lips quivered humorously, and it was evident that he offered her a share in his ironic appreciation of the disposal of events.

She refused. With the instinct of a woman she would reduce him to gravity.

"I heard you last night, Governor Ransom," she said.

"Well, you didn't hear much but growls then, Mrs. Corlis," he smiled. "The people like cheap thunder, and we have to furnish it, you know."

"Don't," she said, as if his lack of seriousness hurt. She added, "I wished to say to you what I feel—it was the most remarkable speech I ever heard."

"Now, now," he chided drolly, "that's laying it on pretty thick. I only can hope you weren't affected by my personalities—it's reached the mud-slinging stage in this campaign—usually does about this far off from election day, you know." His eyes twinkled, his face puckered—he was endeavoring to carry it off facetiously. "We orators," he swelled his chest, "we orators, you know, revile each other like lawyers before a jury,

and then go out and take a drink together." He chuckled at the ludicrousness of the idea and the bones of his long frame wrapped themselves up in a grotesque bunch.

Mrs. Corlis smiled a bit in reciprocity, but insisted,

"That is comical, Governor Ransom, but I am not to be diverted. Seriously, I believe you meant every word you said—you were sincere, and that is why, for the first time in your life, you were truly powerful."

"It must be so, if you say so," he said sheepishly, "but I wasn't aware of it myself. I'm merely getting fun out of this campaign, between you and me." Again he tried to show his humor. "But here comes my train—"

She leaned out of the car window. As she touched his hand, their eyes for an instant really met.

"Good-bye, Randolph," she said.

He flushed at the name.

"It's been again a pleasure, Victoria," he answered, and bowing, turned away. Going, he drawled across his shoulder,

"I forgot to say, I never thought you knew anything about the Electrical Consolidated up at Primrose Hill. Thought I'd tell you, when I saw you, so you wouldn't think I might 've. Good-by."

A radiant smile leaped into her eyes, which, when he turned for the last time some fifteen feet away, he saw. All that a look can give in compensation for a lifetime of endurance, she offered him.

In return she saw him doff the comedian, saw him stand erect a moment, saw his ravaged face, the tragic eyes, the full spiritual stature of the man.

He bowed like the Kentucky gentleman he was born.

XLVI

MR. CORLIS REDUCES ALL MEN TO A LEVEL

MRS. CORLIS drove first to the Auditorium Annex, where J. J. J. had taken rooms; but they told her there that Mr. Jarrett had gone up to Lake Geneva the night before to stay over election day.

The news depressed her; she had counted on her Uncle Johnny. She was feeling rather wretchedly anyhow; the strain she had been under was now telling on her, while last night's shock had sensibly hurt her constantly decreasing powers of resistance. Consequently, as she was driven up Michigan Avenue toward her house on the North Side, she yielded to her disconsolance and her sickness.

It was a little past noon, a fair, fall day, with the semblance of gaiety in its color and aspect, but tinged, somehow, with melancholy fore-knowledge of winter. The churches were emptying, and, as she looked out through the doors of her carriage, Mrs. Corlis saw well-dressed people sauntering along the sidewalks; there were so many smiles, and such pleasant looks, and all seemed, each in his or her harmless, vain way, so contented and happy.

The contrast of her own state with theirs filled her with a dull pain; she even profoundly pitied herself for the nonce. She considered how peaceful, pleasant Sundays would follow one after another, when she was gone; how people, well-to-do people, would smile and look pleased, just as they were doing now. That she would be dead soon, she felt certain; excitement and new ideas had conspired to make her heedless that summer, but to-day she was forcibly reminded of her doom.

Who cared for her? Naturally, not the world which she had entertained and consulted and given her most precious possessions, her soul and her time; not the one being to whose ambitions, vainglorious as they were, she had sacrificed the convictions of her heart and her longings for seriousness and truth; hardly even the few others, whom, incidentally, she had strengthened and helped. Oh, no, she could picture it in advance just as it would be next year at this time. There were her children to grieve for her and to forget her. Her husband—well, he might miss her; he would, she had been so serviceable. Yet she could see him clearly just as he would be next year; he loved life so well, though he loved others coldly; his senses were so perfect, so fitted to transmit pleasurable vibrations; he had so much health, such an appetite for living. She could see him en-

joying himself—dinners and wines and horses and ——. That stung her.

She bowed down her head and held her temples in her hands. No, only two old men would grieve much for her, only two old men would continue to think of her for the few years that remained to each of them; then she would be forgotten. She could realize the last years of those two old men, also. They would be grayer by this time next year and more bent; their old friendship would have increased through community of sorrow; they would drive much together, perhaps, and sit for hours smoking. Perhaps Uncle Johnny would go down to Primrose Hill, and, for her sake, pat her old dogs on the head, although he did not like dogs. The two old men would possess one staple of talk between them,—Vicky's ways, Vicky's wishes, all Vicky's life from the time she was a little girl and their tyrant.

She reached the great house at last—the house of pride, the house she hated. Within, the furniture was all covered with linen, and the pictures were draped; she felt the aspect was that of a ghost house and she shuddered. The butler informed her, however, that her own suite was prepared. Mr. Corlis, she was told, had slept at home; he had just risen and was dressing. She sent him a message and went to her own apart-

ments. In a few minutes came Mr. Corlis' reply; he asked when she would see him. She sent back word that she would be downstairs in half an hour.

She paced restlessly up and down in the great hall waiting for him to appear; it irritated her that he should presume to be late. She had put on a very plain walking suit, which had nothing to relieve her pallor. Indeed, she looked ill and unlovely, except for her great, glowing eyes.

She stopped, while she watched him descend. He came down the wide, carved, wooden staircase, putting down each foot leisurely, gracefully, like some steel-sinewed, delicately-formed cat. His head was high and vigorous, and the proud, strong face, the elegant figure, impressed the susceptible woman, as always, with their sheer health and masculine beauty. After the men and the crowds she had mingled with the last two weeks, her husband appeared to her eyes the incomparable aristocrat, the gentleman by right divine. In advance she felt the satisfaction afforded by his absolute flawlessness as a man of the world.

As he came upon the hall floor, he discovered her and walked forward. He essayed to greet her as usual, as he would welcome the friend he most respected and most trusted; he even stooped, with inimitable ease, over the hand she extended him. But he perceived, in an instant, the change rather in her air than in her manner.

"Oh, come, Victoria," he chided, half in banter, half annoyed, "you do not mean still to hold old offenses over my head, I hope. I confide in your generosity. I am delighted to see you, and there is much to tell that will interest you."

She felt that he was in full possession of his usual confidence, and—shall it be said—of his good-natured contempt. Moreover, there was a certain charm in the grace with which he dispensed both that affected her, and she was a bit tempted to meet him half way and enjoy an hour of delicious intimacy as his comrade and tried friend. He could be so irresistible.

But she was stern.

"Have you seen this morning's *Pundit?*" she demanded almost immediately.

The turquoise-hued eyes, so clear and so shallow, shifted for an instant under her glance.

"Yes," he answered, after a pause. "You mean McBride and me, I suppose. What do you think of it?" he asked somewhat jauntily.

"I am wondering, Walter, how much of it is true."

"Will you sit down? No? Well, would it greatly shock you if it were all true?"

He meant to make light of the matter, but his domineering instinct where his wife was concerned, appeared, despite himself, in his voice.

She answered quietly.

"I did not think Mr. McBride would lend himself to so base a trick. He professed to be my friend."

"I am sorry for your sake, Victoria," said Mr. Corlis, politely, adding, however, almost brusquely the demand: "But why do you persist in holding men and politicians down to your sentimental conceptions? It is useless; it's absurd for a woman of your knowledge and intelligence. There has never been any sentimental weakness about the Cook County Machine that I'm aware of, or for that matter about me. Politics is war, and war's what General Sherman said it was."

Mr. Corlis looked bored and he also assumed that he was abused and had good cause for offense.

But Mrs. Corlis did not change her attitude.

"Then it is true," she said decisively. "Mr. McBride planned the treachery and you acquiesced."

"Treachery!" he echoed. "You, Victoria, have played politics yourself; you're no novice."

He held himself rigidly, but the half-suppressed sneer under his close-cropped mustache was ugly to see.

She stiffened to her full height and looked him directly in the eye.

"If McBride and his hoodlums play Irish

tricks, that is one thing," she announced. "But you, sir, are supposably a gentleman, and you break honor, if you betray my father."

He bowed as if before some unreasonable caprice of an imperious, petted child. With a smile of malice he answered,

"I might plead in palliation of my treachery, Victoria, the Senator's own high example. I fancy he has about illustrated every known trick in the course of his career; he has deserted many a man at the eleventh hour."

"You are not excused," she said coldly.

"Have you not read Governor Ransom's speech, also, in *The Pundit* this morning?" he questioned in retort.

"I heard part of it," she said.

"Then I recommend you to read the remainder."

The evil fascination of his insinuation charmed her as the hissing head of a serpent might have done. He took a newspaper from his pocket and unfolded it.

"Look, here on the first page," he bade. "Ransom charges the saintly Senator with lulling him into inaction by false representations, of beguiling him with lies. He declares the Senator knew all the time about the Electrical Consolidated, and yet the Senator gave the Governor his word at Primrose Hill, nay, wrote it out, that

there was no such scheme behind the combination that controlled the Convention."

"I'll not believe it," gasped Mrs. Corlis. "My father knew nothing of it. It was I who knew, if any one, and I didn't realize it."

"Good thing you didn't," sneered Corlis, "or you might have stirred Ransom up instead of coaxing him to sit still."

"You utter brute," she said, shuddering.

"Well, you see, Victoria, you are no better than us all—you get things done, too. As for your reverend parent," he set his square chin firmly, "Mr. Jarrett wanted your father let in on the ground floor. I didn't like it myself, but Mr. Jarrett insisted. The Senator was offered stock, I know, and I don't know that he refused, though I'm willing to do him the justice to say it would be just like his quixotic hypocrisy to refuse."

She drooped her head and a low moan came through her colorless lips.

"I don't mean to be too hard on you, Victoria." Mr. Corlis made his sort of amends. "Come, do be a good fellow; we get on so famously together when you are. You must see there is no use in trying to jack me up to your reform notions. Every game has its rules. The Senator's scruples I don't believe would allow him to accept stock; but he didn't kick a bit about taking Ransom in. Every man, I've noticed, is unimpeachable, outside his own game."

XLVII

J. J. J. ISSUES ORDERS

MEBBE you'll condescend to notice me, you're such a noticin' feller."

J. J. J. stepped between the two; he held out his hand to his niece, but he looked straight at Corlis.

"Uncle Johnny!" she cried in a whisper.

He turned his great head in her direction, and nodded, reassuringly.

"Yes, Vicky, I'm here to fix things."

Corlis had not said a word; he had not so much as moved. He believed in Napoleon's maxim about doing nothing when you don't know what to do. Besides, his attention was concentrated upon maintaining an easy posture and an unperturbed exterior in what he foresaw would be a difficult experience.

J. J. J. turned upon the man a second time.

"I came down this morning from Wisconsin," he said, in his soft voice. "I saw it in *The Pundit* and I came down to find out from you."

"Had you not better ask McBride?" Corlis

replied placidly. "He is running the campaign in Chicago; he's responsible."

"I ask you," said the magnate directly.

Corlis took two or three steps to the side, but he felt those terribly penetrating eyes following him.

"If it were true," he contended, "it is not all my funeral."

"Come up!" bade J. J. J. following him. "Don't play the baby act!" He broke into a sudden rage. "By God, I'll have the truth, if I have to tear it out of you."

He swung his long arms at his side and confronted Corlis. The great head with its mane, the large ears that stuck out, the wide shoulders and the immense chest, combined to give him a grotesque but terrible aspect. Had he not been, indeed, so compact a force, so incarnate a power, he had almost seemed ridiculous. As it was Corlis recoiled; that terrific glance cut him to the bone.

"You agreed; you were privy to the plan; you played traitor and sneak, you with McBride," shrilled the old man. "By God, is it not so?" The clenched fist in his face made Corlis for a second apprehensive of a blow.

It was a prolonged moment before he answered —in that moment he glanced sidelong at his wife.

She stood apart, a spectator, her crossed hands gathered at her throat, her head bent forward a trifle, her eyes, under half-fallen lids, intently

watching. He understood in a flash what it was she was watching—to observe how he bore the test, to learn if, after all, he were a great man.

But he had to make answer at once.

"I suppose it's not far wrong, Mr. Jarrett," he commenced, half apologetically; "there is, no doubt, more or less truth in what *The Pundit—*"

"Make a plain man a plain answer," J. J. J. ordered, sharply.

"What can I say?" asked Corlis desperately. "As you insist, here is the exact dilemma: Is the whole ticket to go down in total defeat, or may we save a part from the general wreck? Senator Dawes is hopelessly beaten anyhow, and if beaten, it doesn't matter by how much or how little. McBride and I have been figuring upon some facts as they are, that is all."

He faced J. J. J. with a quiet smile as he finished, as if asking him where lay the fault.

"You can't flim-flam the old man, Corlis; so quit trying," said J. J. J. unimpressed. "I want none of your explanations; you did the thing; that's all I want to know."

And he turned his back and went over to his niece.

"I knew there was something loose, Vicky; I told you so on the train. Are you glad to have your old Uncle Johnny on deck here right in time?"

She leaned her aching head down on the old man's shoulder. She was inexpressibly sad and weary and it was an indescribable boon to be allowed to give up and to rely on him.

"Oh, Uncle Johnny," she whispered, "you're so strong and so true."

Corlis felt his isolation, and the whole scene seemed to him rather ridiculous. He wished to end it, to cut short his experience of inferiority. He began an explanation, which if unconvincing, might at least open a way of egress.

"What, pray, do you expect in politics? I only do what they all do. I played for my own hand, which is precisely what the Senator has done all his life and which accounts for his success. Besides, am I bound to sacrifice all my chances to Senator Dawes, especially when his last chance is gone?"

J. J. J. threw up his head.

"Not bound—not bound to this family!"

"No, not in that way," demurred Corlis, sulkily.

"You're bound in all ways," roared J. J. J. "This family made you, took you a clerk and made you somebody. Who are you, anyway? You've no great ability that I've ever discovered; you can sit on the top of my wood-pile, but you never could have cut timber yourself; you're too

lazy and too plumb ornamental." He would have continued, but his niece's hand stopped his mouth.

"Nevertheless, I fancy I am still my own master in a few things," said Corlis stubbornly.

"No, damn you, you ain't," the old man broke out. "You're my man and I'll show you." He shook his clenched fist at Corlis; the other arm was about Mrs. Corlis' waist. "You've needed a good dressing down for a long time and I guess it's come now good and proper. You get into the carriage out there and go hunt up your friend McBride. Bring him 'round to the Annex to see me; I'll be there in half an hour. See you get him, if it takes you all day. And bring yourself with him."

"But suppose he refuses," excepted Corlis, to save himself from the indignity of a prompt obedience.

"You put it to him; you know how," directed J. J. J. "You bring him, or I'll hold you responsible."

"But if I refuse to be your messenger?" gasped Corlis, in an excess of vexation.

"Wish you would," snapped the magnate. "But you're too damned calculating, I guess." And the man of power turned his back on his minion, his whole attention absorbed in solacing his niece.

Corlis glared ineffectually at the back of the

despot, something like rage convulsing his features. But he sternly composed himself, summoning his philosophy, instructing himself to be wise, since this one man he could not bully. Almost all others he could.

"Well, I'm off downtown," he finally announced, but neither his wife nor her uncle appeared to hear him. "I'll do as you wish, Mr. Jarrett, though I must say it's not politics, it's woman's folly."

With which last spiteful speech he went out, like a boy persuading himself he was agreeing to do what he was compelled to do.

Before J. J. J. departed for the Annex, Mrs. Corlis said pleadingly:

"Don't be too hard on him, Uncle Johnny; remember, I don't want you to be."

Mr. Jarrett shook his head.

"He needs a trimming, Vicky; it'll do him good. It's only his conceit that's going to get hurt any."

XLVIII

TWO MEN AND A GENTLEMAN

IDEALISTS alone refuse to recognize sovereigns. Even in this early day the practical American, having discovered who is sovereign, uncovers before him; therefore, McBride, when Mr. Corlis brought him to the hotel late in the afternoon, was subdued in his manner, not to say self-deprecatory.

The magnate did not rise; he did not even offer his hand; he only nodded and motioned to two chairs set before his own, perhaps four feet away. Mr. Corlis and the Boss sat down; somehow neither had anything to say.

J. J. J. did not bestir himself or hasten to speak. He looked hard at McBride and in turn at Corlis. "Hum!" he ejaculated saturninely, and then hung his head sidewise and ruminated. He combed his loose whiskers with his strong fingers the while.

Corlis ventured to remark,

"I had trouble finding Mr. McBride; but I told him you wanted to see him and couldn't wait."

No response was vouchsafed.

"I just dropped everything, Mr. Jarrett, and come right along," explained the Boss propitiatingly. He looked into his hat.

The magnate's scrutiny was again turned on the pair, each of whom felt it.

"Hum, what's your idea of this whole matter, McBride?" at last he asked suddenly.

"What do I think?" repeated the Boss nervously.

"That's what I want to learn," J. J. J. nodded.

"I think it's a mighty bad bizness," admitted McBride.

The magnate smiled. It was a hard smile.

"I didn't expect anything different from you, McBride—you acted after your own kind. You Irish I've always found to be sentimental as women and treacherous as Comanches."

McBride shifted in his seat.

"Bizness is bizness," he muttered testily.

"Let's get to it, then," bade the money-master ominously. "What I want to know is whether you still are bent on your scheme of sacrificing the legislative ticket for Corlis here. Are you?"

"Why not?" asked McBride. His head was low, he could not bear that gaze; but so is a bull's head low when he sets his wrinkled neck to contest a charge. "Why not?" repeated the Boss.

"I furnished the money for your campaign," answered J. J. J.

"So as to elect Corlis governor," amended McBride.

"Not before the Senator," excepted the magnate.

"That ain't practical any more, as things have turned out," asserted the Boss stolidly. "The Senator's beat anyhow. Organization's a good thing, Mr. Jarrett, and your money 'll go a long way; but, when the people gets up on their hind legs, I'm tellin' you, there ain't nothin' this side of God Almighty can stop 'em."

"Can't you throw over Corlis and save Senator Dawes? That's only t'other way about, I guess," insisted J. J. J. "I'll subscribe unlimitedly to that proposition."

The Boss was either taken aback or he was nimble and affected to be.

"You don't mean it?" he quavered.

"I do," said the magnate.

"But it ain't practical," objected McBride. "A United States Senator don't benefit us any, but a governor—he interests the boys."

J. J. J. ruminated. At last he said,

"See here, McBride, I don't know a lot about politics, except that it's a skin game; but I went into this to reëlect Dawes and I mean to get my money's worth back. Corlis here asked me to enter your Electrical Consolidated. I agreed; but I made clear to him he must help the Senator before all things."

"I never so understood it, excuse me," demurred Mr. Corlis, meekly yet firmly.

Jarrett quelled him with a look.

"Corlis ain't as big a fool as he'd like to make out, McBride," said J. J. J. drily. "That was the understanding, McBride," he continued. "I'll put it stronger; they were my orders. If they weren't spoken plain, Corlis, you ought to have read 'em plain—for I don't tolerate numskulls for men around me. So the long and short of it is, you disobeyed orders—he tried to fool me, McBride. Tell me, you've got sense, do I look like a man to be monkeyed with?"

"No, not exactly," admitted the Boss humorously. "But, excuse me, as the candidate, Corlis has got obligations to the party, to the boys, as well as to you, Mr. Jarrett. His manager has got somethin' to say; he ain't bossin' the campaign and adornin' the ticket all in one breath, you bet."

"I know nothing about his obligations to you, and I don't care." J. J. J. indulged in results, not in scruples. "But what's your forecast; let's hear your estimate."

"We expect to carry Cook County by 40,000," replied the Boss. "There's no countin' on the state; Ransom's got it by from ten to fifty thousand anywhere; it'll be a slump, sure."

"Hum!" mused J. J. J. "Then, as close as I can figure, Corlis' chance is a slim one, even

though you cut everything to benefit him. Am I right?"

"To get down to bizness, you are so, Mr. Jarrett; but he's promised to recognize the organization when he gets down to Springfield, and that goes with us."

"Look here, McBride," said J. J. J. slowly, "you won't elect Corlis. How many members of the legislature could you save for the Senator here in Chicago, if you wanted to, say mighty badly?"

"Half a dozen, mebbe more," answered the Boss, promptly.

"Then do it," bade the magnate. "Corlis ain't my man any more; he doesn't represent my interests a moment longer, you understand. When you back him, you take him minus *me*. And I tell you flat, if you are expecting the city railways to deal with you in the future as in the past, you've got to get down and do your damnedest for the Senator."

His glittering eyes drove home the significance of what he said.

"How does that strike you, McBride?" he asked drily.

"Pretty well," admitted the Boss. "I guess I'll agree, Mr. Jarrett. Corlis ain't got much chance anyhow; and, come to think of it, a governor down in Springfield without the legislature wouldn't do us half as much good as you can do

us harm up here in Chicago, Mr. Jarrett. I guess you mean what you say." McBride looked quizzical.

"Count on it," said J. J. J. "And I have your word, have I, McBride?"

"I guess so, Mr. Jarrett." The Boss sighed. "Of course, you ain't supposin' Cook County by itself is goin' to fix it for the Senator. We'll do all we can, and mebbe there's a chance; but Ransom's got things in a terrible stew down the state."

J. J. J. relaxed. Except for his eyes and the movements of his neck he had sat as immobile as an Indian chief; but now a satisfied smile spread across his visage and he rubbed his hands.

"Now what do you propose to do with Corlis here, McBride?" he asked, innocently.

"Leave him drop," replied the Boss succinctly.

The magnate fixed his scrutiny upon Corlis, who with a look of boredom in his handsome face awaited the issue.

"You're not a fool," J. J. J. announced; "you can see things. You know it wouldn't help you to make a fuss. And I guess you can measure up what you amount to, too; I guess it'll kind of do you good. And, mebbe, if you behave well and take your medicine like a little man, we'll perhaps do something for you, later on."

Corlis smiled; the correct, unmeaning smile of the imperturbable man of the world.

" I'm a good loser, Mr. Jarrett, you will find."

" You'd better be," grunted McBride, rising from his chair. " And, now we ain't partners no more, I'll just tell Mr. Jarrett what's been the trouble all along." The Boss pointed his big thumb backwards to indicate Corlis to the magnate. " He's got the big-head, got it bad."

" Leave him to me; I'll attend to his case." And J. J. J. rubbed his hands.

Corlis shut his teeth; he had to grind them to repress his rage. His spirit had always cowered before J. J. J.; but to have his shame uncovered before the Irish Boss, whom he regarded as an inferior, infuriated him.

Yet, when McBride was gone, he made no protest. He accepted like a well-bred man, when he is helpless, whatever indignities plebeians were disposed to put upon him.

" I always knew you hated me," was all he said to Mr. Jarrett.

" I did not," answered J. J. J. judicially. " I disliked what I thought you might be, and it's turned out that's what you are."

And the old man bent on Corlis a scrutiny so powerful, so fixed, that the latter sat fascinated, as in a spell. He felt as if a still, strong light were penetrating his flesh, searching the recesses of his soul. The bewitchment grew upon him, he was obsessed; those eyes that bound him became

his own wife's eyes, the dark, true eyes he knew—only they were no longer fond, nor generous, nor forgiving to him, now; instead they were without illusion and they probed—they probed. To them never more could he pose, vaingloriously—they knew him for a sham, a spurious great man, a vain pretender.

"This world grinds coarse," said J. J. J., "but it grinds, I guess."

XLIX

AN EDITORIAL

THE PUNDIT of Wednesday morning, the day after election day, contained a leading editorial, written by MacPherson himself.

"Governor Ransom, rather than the Democratic party, has swept the state. He forced the issue upon the people, if he did not name the candidate. He brought to the support of Gustave Schwab the decisive minority, if he did not furnish the solid support. Riding the Free Silver warhorse, the redoubtable spoilsman has reversed all the political precedents of Illinois, and, after renouncing his party and leading a crusade against it, he finds himself stronger than ever, the idol of Egypt and the trusted leader of many who had always regarded him askance.

"We suspect that two years hence, Randolph Ransom will become the presidential nominee of the new party, which, whatever it call itself, will represent the new issue.

"But as for the state. Governor Ransom has both revenged himself and achieved a solid victory. He alone, in a period of forty years, has had the good-fortune or the good skill to unhorse Sen-

ator Dawes. 'Uncle Simeon' has somehow survived many conflicts, also many friends. His enemies, heretofore, have always been beaten, his friends effectually used and used up. At last he has been out-generaled and out-fought by a former lieutenant, whom he attempted to hoodwink. Governor Ransom has been devoted to Senator Dawes; but he objected to being kept neutral while his enemies within the party usurped his place. He objected to being sacrificed to Corlis and McBride in order that Senator Dawes might be reëlected to the Senate. We don't blame him.

"As for Walter H. D. Corlis, he was a dangerous possibility in Illinois. He was showy, vainglorious, with the aspect of respectability and the unscrupulousness of a highwayman. He has ability; but he is the sort of cool and complacent individual who is generally overrated. His bubble is pricked for good.

"McBride still remains. He will remain. Such monstrous parasites as he are not to be exterminated. True, the limits of his authority are now marked and defined; his bailiwick marches and ends with Cook County, but inside he is still Chicago's Black Boss.

"The Democracy seems to appreciate its debt to the great champion of Free Silver, the great foe of the power of money. It had better. It can't chance on such a leader more than once in two

decades. He is a despot by temperament and a demagogue by art, and at last he has joined the crowd who like to be bossed and love to be fooled. *The Pundit* never liked Randolph Ransom and does not believe in him now. But *The Pundit* can recognize brains when it sees them, and in that especial particular never underrated Governor Ransom.

"He can be chosen Senator this winter to succeed Senator Dawes, if he chooses. We advise him to resist the seduction. He will, if he be wise. If he is wise, he will content himself with remaining the manager and master-spirit of the Silver movement, with cementing the factions, with forging a machine for himself (and he is an expert at the business), so that he may be in a position to demand and receive at the hands of the next Democratic National Convention that recognition to which his personality and his services entitle him.

"*The Pundit* neither approves of Governor Ransom nor sanctions his mental processes; yet welcomes the opportunity of crossing swords with a man of no mean ability, no mediocre talent."

Such was *The Pundit's* summation of the election's results. It was not far wrong.

Corlis carried Chicago and Cook County by nearly ten thousand votes; but J. J. J.'s interference cost him at least ten thousand votes. Middle and upper Illinois, usually Republican, gave, in all,

scarcely two thousand plurality for the ticket. Thus Egypt was left to confront Chicago and the exact vote in her back districts was slow in coming in.

But there was no need to await the back districts; Egypt had confirmed her faith in Ransom's leadership by an immense majority—so much was apparent by midnight of election day. Governor Ransom had spent the day before, Monday, in making passionate last appeals from the tail-end of a train at some thirty points in that benighted "neck of the woods." And Egypt had rallied to his call; she returned a Democratic plurality like those before the war; she overwhelmed Chicago's ten thousand plurality with one of twenty-seven thousand. Ransom buried the man he hated under an adverse plurality of fifteen thousand votes.

L

FINALITIES

CHRISTOPHER RUGGLES was set down in Chicago soon after four o'clock of a raw November day. He had come up from Springfield whence he had returned with Governor Ransom after the last-day dash through Egypt. Election was over and to-morrow he would be expected to report at the *Pundit* office and resume local work.

He left the ugly railway station, emerging upon the streets. The same sullen, uncomfortable crowd swarmed on the sidewalks, the same monstrous traffic choked the roadways. The walls of the "sky-scrapers" ran up like sheer cliffs, the tops wreathed in vapors of cold smoke that the lake wind wound and unwound about the pinnacles, drove in dense sheets down into the abysses called streets, or tossed up in thick folds until they enshrouded the sky.

Ruggles saw what he was used to; but it hurt him more than usual. It was tremendous, no doubt; but it was ugly as well. The tide flowed about those topping hulks of steel and stone, and strongly in and out through all the crevices—a

vast and heedless force, propelled, as it were, by some heartless monster of a machine that pulsed a constant motion, oblivious of any chance individual destruction that might occur.

He wondered and admired, as he had a thousand times before—as he admired Niagara. To-day, in addition, he hated it, feeling on bare nerves its whole ruthlessness and barbarity; the swing of the heavy whip upon the flanks of the overloaded horses cut him to the quick; the human faces, flaccid with an old indifference to defeat, or agonizing in a fresh despair, filled him with a sick pity. And those other human faces, hard and energetic, seamed with fraud or inflamed with greed, the faces of the conquerors, them he loathed.

What disillusion, indeed, the reality of life had brought to a sentimental thinker who, in his first youth, had believed men noble, society swayed by some great Justice, the universe moving upward to some mystic, moral end! Poor soul, Humor never served as hand-maid to his reason; his nerves were, perforce, victimized by his serious genus.

He walked now along the streets. It was the hour when a multitude of toilers are let out the rookeries, freed from the machines. Girls by hundreds sought the cable cars and elevated stations; the chill wind searched them keenly, while male animals of prey watched for an exposed ankle or the outline of a bust. Ruggles boiled; he felt

himself a rebel against Nature. These wretched creatures, so illy nourished, so feebly willed, how could they withstand, when hard-pushed by cruel circumstances? Yet each was a woman and, therefore, pitiful.

The early winter gloom shut down and a million globes of light made filmy circles in the obscurity. Ruggles plodded on. Where should he go? He owned no inclination that pointed anywhere. He was a man, alone, minus the web of relationships which knitted others, rich and poor alike, to the social scheme. He was removed by "culture," by experience of the mind, from participation in the unthinking life of the masses, while other causes forbade the merging of his loneliness in the higher existence of the few. That he realized the peculiarity of his isolation was characteristic of the man; he knew, also, how many in the gigantic city repeated his own case. He was stifling for the oxygen of real companionship, although two million human beings fluttered about him in a tumult every day.

Gard had been delayed in her office; it was after six as she came down in the elevator. But dark streets never daunted her and she sallied forth; she emerged from under the stone archway that formed the mouth of the enormous bee-hive. The pallid glare of the electric light revealed her tall figure and the severe outline of her face.

She paused insensibly upon the pavement—she, too, was not drawn anywhere. For a moment a passion of desolation swept her features, and her lips parted in a sigh; then the accustomed resolution sealed expression close. She turned to walk away.

"Gard."

A man who stepped from out the shadow spoke her name.

She did not stop.

"Is—is that you, Chris? I'm glad to see you."

Her voice was that of friendship, cordial, calm.

"Don't, Gard, don't," he murmured, following. "I've come back, Gard; I've come back for good. It's been so horrible—don't freeze me up."

They crossed into another zone of light and Gard surveyed him comprehensively.

"All right, Chris," she concluded, "come along. I won't say a word; I guess we're quits—you've suffered as much as I."

"Dear Gard," he whispered, as he fell in with her steps.

"You bet I'm dear," echoed Gard, with a laugh. "If I were like most women, I'd make you dance around awhile on hot irons for a month. But I never was mean," she asserted, thankfully.

"You're the most generous soul on earth," he portested, in his self-abasement, "and I think I'm the littlest, quite. I never shall forgive myself,

dear Gard, that I went away at all, though I believe I always meant to come back."

"Pooh, Chris, don't take on so; we're such old friends, why shouldn't I be nice to you?"

She put a great deal of astonishment into her voice.

The reporter slipped in a trice from the felicity of misery into its distress.

"Friends! Oh, Gard, you don't think we're that!"

She was flushing in the dark.

"Can't we be friends?" she queried. Then flippantly, "It's evident you don't much appreciate my forgiveness, Chris."

"No, we can't," said Ruggles, shortly. He fancied vaguely he might perhaps, for once in his life, proceed like a man of action and round up matters with a sharp turn. "No, Gard, we can't," he repeated firmly. "I didn't come back to be just friends; that's not enough. I've been so good for nothing and so lonely; I am no good without you, Gard, at all." The plaintive note in his voice gave way to one almost of fear. "You won't turn me off, Gard, even if I do deserve it, to endure my misery and loneliness? You won't; it wouldn't be like you, Gard."

She had purposed to surrender at discretion in her own time; but her heart melted for his poignant suffering—she herself knew so well what it

was. She reached in the shadow and impulsively her hand fluttered into his.

"No, no, Chris, not yet! Tell me first—you do forgive me, and you see now I might have been—bad—once, for a day—and yet be worthy of a good man's love?"

"Don't—don't talk so, Gard; you are the noblest woman I ever knew."

"What, Mrs. Corlis?" taunted Gard, half glad to escape into levity.

"Oh, Gard, she is you own sister in spirit." The tone was almost a reproach.

"I know," said Gard, reverently.

"And, Gard, besides her, it was your letters brought me back. They were so strong and I felt so little, so little like a man."

"Then it was good for you," said Gard contentedly.

"That's true, it was," he meekly acquiesced. "And it was very brave of you to write," he added, with a burst of admiration.

"Oh, that I had to do, dear Chris. Too much was at stake. But tell me, did they make you understand, do you think? I—I wrote them with my tears and blood."

"They made me worship you for the most courageous soul—" he vowed.

"Now that, Chris, is not what I want. What I mean is, did they make you see how a woman

refuses to be cast down, because of a mistake of ignorance and youth? Can you now believe what is true of me that I am better, honestly better, for it all?"

He hesitated.

"Can you?" came the insistent reiteration.

"I'm jealous, Gard, miserably jealous still." Chris laid down his arms. "But I suppose I can understand, intellectually understand—perhaps."

"Of course you can," assented Gard. "I'm not repentant—I never was. The way to mend a matter is by action, not by whining. We ought to grow in grace and mind and true nobility by reason of our sins and passions, or what's the use of them?"

They turned a corner into State street, where the electrical illumination, if of another tint than day's, seemed as strong. Ruggles saw her now, the high bearing, the clean limbs, the beautiful strong face aflash with meaning, and the aureole of pale, gold hair. Some classic recollection stirred in him—ah, he knew—she was a Greek Victory, unconquerable, glorious, rare.

He bowed his head as in a reverent acceptance of a spirit nobler than all the Magdalens that ever wept.

"Yes, Gard, it is all as you say. But what I know clearly is that you are much above me and that you lift me up."

She turned to him with sudden weakness.

"Oh, Chris," she said, "it is so good to have you back again, to hear your voice, to look into your dear eyes. Chris, the world was a very lonely place while you were away."

"Where are we bound for?" he asked presently.

"Straight out to the McBrides'," Gard declared. "I must let Gretchen know, first thing, for she's been worried half to death, and besides, there's nothing will so much please the Boss."

"Strange, Gard, isn't it?" mused Chris: "I thought, once, he must be some sort of coarse, vulgar devil."

"Oh, Chris, that fat Irishman's a knight at heart, though he is a ward politician got up."

Ruggles gazed absent-mindedly about the table, and, after his wont, relapsed into thought. McBride oozed geniality, while Gretchen of the flaxen braids still showed cheeks stained by the whimpering with which she had received Gard's announcement.

The reporter was happy and for years he had been miserable. Yet he still must analyze and he found it strange. A student of government and political science, a doctrinaire, one who had been ardent for reform and zealous for purity in politics, he was now associated in intimacy with an

Irish Boss and his wife; he was engaged to marry a woman of a new type, who refused to manifest repentance or to look back upon what was done; and the paradox of the whole situation was, that he now felt more confident of the practical issue of the truths in which he believed than he ever had while he stood well within Respectability's white pale.

America had come very far, he mused. She was working out her own development in ways original. And the student who complained of her, the idealist who was shocked by her, were ignorant in reality and of little faith. Let such work with her in the common ways, let them humbly learn and close their foolish mouths!

The gentlemanly purist was become an anachronism to-day; McBride and Ransom were the realities. Ruggles, for one, did not protest. Poetry had been written before the critics ever had laid down its laws; economics and politics perform their work with no reference to the views of the professors of the subjects, who investigate past accomplished things and cackle sapiently about present tendencies to classes of callow youths.

He heard the Boss telling Gard about Mr. Jarrett's coercion of Corlis, and describing how that affected the results. The narrative confirmed, to his mind, what he had come to believe was the truth. The world was full of forces and action

was their interplay. Reformers and doctrinaires expected government to excel human nature and business to obey abstractions that had no force. He smiled at them now.

Likewise his Gard refuted the conventional moralists. She was the free, persistent spirit of America. She refused to take the punishment decreed of old; she scoffed at the solemn monstrosities of the sin-oppressed imagination; she was Greek, noble, dauntless, laughter loving.

In the toleration of his mood, Ruggles framed an apology even for the Boss. McBride might be corrupt; he was; but he was also very human.

Gard was saying to the McBrides,

"No, I'm going out of business. I have cleared up eighty thousand dollars and that's about enough for Chris and me."

"But what are you goin' to do?" asked the Boss. "You've got to do something, as you ain't the sort to lay 'round."

"Oh, we're going to Europe, first of all. I've got to see Paris and the Alps, and Chris, I guess, can theorize doing nothing over there just as well as if he were doing stunts for the old *Pundit* between his thinks here."

The three laughed at the sally.

"Yes," inquired McBride, "but if you're goin' gallivantin' round the earth for fun, where does

Chris come in, I'd like to know, with his reformin' itch and his socialism?"

"It's none of my business what he thinks, if he only acts my way," declared Gard, with her inimitable effrontery. "I've about worked my share, I guess, and now I want to get reposeful and cultured and that sort of thing. I didn't make this world and so it's not up to me, necessarily, to tinker up its squeaky machinery. There is something besides feeling your responsibilities in this life." She was encouraged to exaggeration. "Chris there, I can tell you, won't wear so long a face when he's got me to cheer him up; if he must mourn for humanity, I mean to fix it anyway so he can't mourn for himself."

McBride exploded in a loud guffaw and Gretchen tinkled her accompaniment, while Chris smiled rather uncomprehendingly at his Gard.

LI

OTHER FINALITIES.

THE weeks that immediately followed the election found Mr. Corlis much at home. His clubs apparently contained small attraction for him, while the companionship of men whose manner was continually a delicate acknowledgment of his superiority in money and power, he seemed content altogether to eschew. In fine, the inclination to domesticity that he evinced was unprecedented so far as his wife could recall. He lingered in the room in which she chanced to be; he invented little courtesies as if to prove his devotion to her woman's mind; he followed her when he could and helped to beguile many a lagging hour.

She tolerated rather than accepted these evidences of friendship or of fondness on his part; she permitted them because she was too apathetic to resist, and because she frequently found any presence welcome that could dissipate the solitude of her thoughts. Indeed, in time, she grew a little thankful for his constancy, and mildly acquiesced in his new appreciation.

Only once were her emotions stirred from dullness, and that was by the news of Governor Ran-

som's sudden death. In despite of her own defeat, she had thrilled exultantly at the announcement of his victory in the election. And now the manner of his death thrilled her again. The Governor had fallen dead in the State House in Springfield one December afternoon. One moment he had been talking animatedly, the next he was lying lifeless on the floor.

She remembered that in the old days he had frequently expressed his wish to die suddenly, "in his boots." And she felt that his death now was not to be regretted. He had reached the height of his career; for him there would be no slow, inevitable decline from the summit he had so toilsomely attained. He had lived life out, gotten its good, made himself the strong man he was designed to be. What else remained?

She read the newspaper descriptions of his funeral and the grudging acknowledgments of editors and respectabilities. She felt that the people's sorrow compensated for their indifference. A common grief reigned in the country between the Wabash, the Ohio and the Mississippi; sixty thousand people attended the funeral at the capital of the state; hard-handed men and women wept as they looked for the last time upon the Roman face of him who had been their idol, their champion, their hero.

From such tragical contemplation, Mrs. Corlis

turned with a new pity to the deft ministrations of her husband. She came to realize how forlorn the vain man was, stripped of office and of power, deprived of the daily homage of his fellow-men, which had made life pleasurable to him. She saw how plausibly in the future he might grow to impute responsibility for his downfall to her intervention, and how bitter his memory of her might become. Once or twice she detected in his eyes that look of subservience which first had affected her, when he was a departmental clerk in Washington and she the toasted heiress. That look of his poor youth made her ashamed.

In the old house down at Primrose Hill, in the presence of the prairies and their silences, she resumed with her father the simple life which they had lived years ago, and was released forever from the fever of the world which had once nearly consumed her.

The Senator she found despondent in defeat and inclined at moments to cynicism and misanthropy. The duty of cheering him and lightening his humor devolved upon her. In her effort to comfort him she had recourse to the precepts of the high Puritan philosophy in whose justice her youth had been instructed and from whose severity her womanhood had shrunk. In evoking them

to sustain the spirit of another, she found solace for herself.

The two often sat together within the glass protected porch, passing silent hours content in one another's company. They saw the naked prairies become mantled in white snow and the suns go down early in bleak winter splendors. Each knew that life for them had been completed and that they were no longer of interest to the world. Each day the Senator, who felt that he was the last of the old Americans, was further alienated from what for years had closed him round, and each day Mrs. Corlis withdrew further into her inheritance.

Indeed, in those last days, in the house of her fathers, breathing the country air and conscious only of the great simplicities, Mrs. Corlis relapsed into Puritanism; then the moral genius of her race emerged and captured her imagination and her mind. She felt she had attained to a right perception of the relativity of things. Her own experience of life had demonstrated to her that the meaning of existence is moral and that human life can only so be justified.

Nevertheless, in the conviction of her recovered Puritanism Mrs. Corlis did not assume the fault of Puritanism, its provincial judgment and its inclination to mistake respectability for righteousness. She had lived too much; her mind's experi-

ence was too catholic. As with last invincible insight she pierced to the soul of things, some of her conclusions were these:

She was no longer impressed by unassailable virtue nor by immaculate states maintained. What she esteemed was the persistence after good, a persistence found as often in one station as in another, in the slums as frequently as on the avenue, displayed as often by persons discredited as by those approved in the world's regard, to be seen sometimes in citizens prone to evil, and sometimes to be missed in gentlemen confirmed in a conceit of virtue.

For herself Mrs. Corlis was content. She had learned life's secret, and to learn that is the end and all of life. Besides, did she not look forward to a long tranquillity?

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